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SKANDA-PURANA

PART VII

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SKANDA PURĀṆA

BOOK II : VAIṢṆAVAKHAṆḌA

SECTION VII : VAIŚĀKHAMĀSA-MĀHĀTMYA*

CHAPTER ONE

The Greatness of the Holy Bath in Vaiśākha

Obeisance to Śrī Gaṇeśa

After bowing down to Nārāyaṇa, Nara the most excellent one among men, Goddess Sarasvatī and Vyāsa, one should recite *Jaya* (the Purāṇa).[1]

Sūta said:

1. Once again, the king (Aṁbarīṣa) asked Nārada, the son of Brahmā Parameṣṭhin, about the meritorious greatness of the month of Vaiśākha.

Aṁbarīṣa said:

2-6. The greatness of all the months has been truly heard by me from you, O Brāhmaṇa, formerly. It was then said by you that among these months Vaiśākha was the most excellent one. Hence, O Brāhmaṇa, I have great curiosity to hear the greatness of the month of Vaiśākha. How is it that this month is dear to Viṣṇu? What are those holy rites which Viṣṇu likes to be performed in the month that is a favourite of Mādhava? Out of these too, what are those holy rites most dear to Viṣṇu and worthy of being performed? What is to be given as charitable gift? What is its benefit? With whom (what deity) in view are we to perform these

* Vaiśākha is another month which is favourite with Viṣṇu. In PdP, Pātāla Khaṇḍa, Ch. 84, as a background of this Māhātmya, we are told that once Nārada went to Mathurā to see King Aṁbarīṣa, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa (vv 8-10). *Vaiśākha-Māhātmya* is thus a dialogue between these two.

1. This benedictory verse shows that Vaiśākhmāsa-Māhātmya (VM) is an independent work incorporated in SkP. We have a VM in PdP V (Pātāla-Khaṇḍa), Chs. 84-98.

rites? What are those materials of worship with which Mādhava is to be worshipped at the advent of the month of Vaiśākha? O Nārada, describe this in detail to me who am full of devotion.

Śrī Nārada replied:

7. Formerly, on being asked by me, Brahmā described the ancient (traditional) holy rites pertaining to the different months as had been described previously to Śrī by the Supreme Ātman (Viṣṇu).

8. Thereupon, some months were particularly mentioned (such as) Kārttika and Māgha. Mādhava (Viṣṇu) made Vaiśākha the most excellent one among the months.

9-14. (The month of Vaiśākha) is the bestower of the desired things upon all the living beings, like a mother forever. It is the destroyer of all sins by means of charitable gifts, holy rites and ablutions. It is the essence of all virtues (religious acts), Yajñas and holy rites. It is the essence of all austerities. It is worshipped by Suras.

Like the Vedic lore among all lores,[1] like Praṇava among all Mantras, like the divine Kalpa (wish-yielding) tree among trees, like the Kāmadhenu (wish-yielding cow) among all cows, like Śeṣa among all serpents, like Garuḍa among all birds, like Viṣṇu among all Devas, like Brāhmaṇa among all castes, like the vital air among the dearest objects, like wife among intimate ones, like Gaṅgā among all rivers, like the sun among luminaries, like discus among all the weapons, like gold among all metals, like Rudra among all Vaiṣṇavas and like Kaustubha among all jewels, Vaiśākha is the most excellent one among all the months conducive to piety and virtuousness.

15-17. There is nothing else like this in the world which is conducive to the pleasure of Viṣṇu.

The Lord accompanied by Lakṣmī is much delighted with a person habitually engaged in the holy bath before sunrise in the month of Vaiśākha (when the Sun is) in Aries.[2]

Just as creatures are pleased with food, so also Viṣṇu is undoubtedly pleased with the holy bath in the month of Vaiśākha. On

1. VV 11-14 are an echo of BG X (*Vibhūti-Yoga*).

2. VV 15-26 describe the meritorious nature of early bath (before sunrise) in Vaiśākha. The deities of Tīrthas go away from them after six *ghaṭis* from sunrise.

seeing people engaged in holy bath in the month of Vaiśākha, he becomes highly pleased.

18-22a. By that itself one is liberated from sins and is honoured in the world of Viṣṇu. By taking bath once in the morning when the Sun is in Aries and performing the daily round of duties, the devotee is liberated from great sins. He shall attain *Sāyujya* (identity) with Viṣṇu.

If a man takes a step for the purpose of ablution in the month of Vaiśākha, he undoubtedly attains the benefit of ten thousands of horse-sacrifices.

Or a man of crooked mind may simply resolve (this) within his mind. Even he will obtain the merit of a hundred sacrifices. There is no doubt in it.

He who goes a distance of a Dhanus (=distance of three and a half hands) in order to bathe when the Sun is in Aries, shall be liberated from all bondages. He shall attain *Sāyujya* with Viṣṇu.

22b-26. O eminent king, all the Tīrthas in the three worlds within the Cosmic Egg are present even in very little of water in streams etc. Sins entered in the records of Yama roar only as long as a living being does not take bath in cold water in the month of Vaiśākha!

All the deities of the Tīrthas etc., O king, are always present in the external water (i.e., in rivers, lakes etc.,) in the month of Vaiśākha. At the behest of Viṣṇu and with a desire for the welfare of men they stay there for six *ghaṭikās* (24×6=144 Minutes) from sunrise. If men do not take bath by that time, they curse them terribly and go over to their respective abodes. Hence, O great king one should take bath (as stated).

CHAPTER TWO

The Benefit of Different Kinds of Charitable Gifts

Nārada said:

1-5. There is no month equal to Vaiśākha.[1] There is no Yuga equal to Kṛta; there is no holy text equal to the Veda; there is no Tīrtha equal to Gaṅgā.

1. Again an echo of BG X. The comparisons are made to confirm the supreme position (meritorious nature) of Vaiśākha.

There is no charitable gift comparable to that of water; there is no happiness on a par with that of a wife; there is no wealth comparable to agriculture and there is no gain greater than life.

There is no austerity comparable to observance of fast; there is no happiness greater than that of a charitable gift. There is no holy rite equal to mercifulness; there is no refulgence on a par with the eye.

There is no satisfaction similar to that of taking food; there is no business activity comparable to agriculture. There is no friend on a par with virtue; there is no reputation like that of truthfulness.

There is no acquisition on a par with good health; there is no saviour greater than Keśava; there is no purifier equal to Vaiśākha, as the learned know.

6-10. Vaiśākha is the greatest month. It is always a favourite of Viṣṇu. If anyone were to pass this month dearest to Viṣṇu, without observing holy rites, he is reborn in the wombs of sub-human species like birds, animals. He is excluded from all pious activities.

If any human being spends the month of Vaiśākha without observing *Vratas*, his Iṣṭāpūrta (performing sacrifices, building ghats, repairing lakes and wells etc.) is futile.

If there is any (self-imposed) restraint on having food one is accustomed to have in Vaiśākha, certainly, he will attain *Sāyujya* with Viṣṇu. There is no doubt about it.

In this world there are different kinds of Vratas that can be observed only by spending much wealth. They cause much strain to the body and they yield (result in) rebirth. But merely by taking holy bath in the month of Vaiśākha, one is not reborn on the earth.

11. By offering water in the month of Vaiśākha one attains that merit which is obtained by making all types of charitable gifts and visiting all Tīrthas.

12. If one is incapable of offering water, one should induce others to do it, if one is desirous of prosperity. It is more conducive to welfare than all charitable gifts.

13. If all charitable gifts are placed in one pan and the gift of water is placed in the other pan and weighed in a balance, the gift of water excels.

14. One who donates *Prapās* (free-water sheds) for wayfarers, uplifts a crore of the members of his family. He is honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

15. Offering water through Prapās gives excessive pleasure to Devas, Pitṛs and Sages, O excellent king. It is true. There is no doubt at all.

16. If those who are tired due to long walk along the road are delighted by means of Prapās, Devas including Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are propitiated by him.

17-19. Water should be given to those who wish for it. An umbrella should be given to those who desire shade. In the month of Vaiśākha, O king, fans should be given to those who wish for fans. At the advent of the month of Vaiśākha, water, umbrella and fan should be given to a Brāhmaṇa householder. The gift of these articles is (considered) excellent. By not giving a waterpot, one is reborn as a Cātaka bird (who depends on rainfall for drinking water).

20. If a person gives cool water to a noble-souled person oppressed by thirst, O eminent king, by that act itself he shall get the merit of ten thousand Rājasūyas.

21. He who fans a Brāhmaṇa oppressed by heat and fatigue shall become free from sins by that (act) itself. He shall become the overlord of heaven-walkers (Devas etc).

22. By not giving fans to Brāhmaṇas in the month of Vaiśākha one becomes afflicted with hundred types of rheumatic ailments and goes to hell.

23. If a person fans with even a cloth an excellent Brāhmaṇa tired by (a walk) along the road, he shall become liberated by that itself and shall attain *Sāyujya* with Viṣṇu.

24. By giving a fan made of Palmyra leaf with a pure mind, one gets rid of all sins and goes to the world of Brahmā.

25. If a man does not give the meritorious fan that dispels fatigue, he suffers torture in hell and is reborn on the earth as a leper.

26. O lord of men, one shall ardently give an umbrella at least once in the month of Vaiśākha for suppressing the three types of miseries, viz. those originating in the body, those from other creatures and those from destiny.

27. One who does not give an umbrella in the course of the month of Vaiśākha of which Mādhava is fond, is reborn on the earth as a highly cruel ghost in a place devoid of any shade.

28. He who gives excellent sandals in the month of Vaiśākha is liked by Viṣṇu, disregards the messengers of Yama and goes to

the world of Viṣṇu.

29. If a person gives footwear in the month of Vaiśākha at the advent of the vernal season, he has not to suffer the distresses of this world nor will he go to the world of hells.

30. He who gives footwear to a Brāhmaṇa who requests for it, is reborn as a king on the earth in the course of a crore births undoubtedly.

31. It is not possible even for Brahmā to describe the merit of that person who erects a pavilion on the way that dispels the fatigue of helpless persons.

32. The limit of the benefit of that person has not been seen (even) by Brahmā, who feeds a Brāhmaṇa who has come (to his house) as a guest.

33. O king, the gift of cooked food is conducive to immediate satisfaction. Hence there is no other gift on a par with cooked food in all the worlds.

34. Even Brahmā is not competent to describe the merit of that person who offers shelter to a Brāhmaṇa who is weary due to long walk on the way.

35. If a person does not eat sufficiently, wives, children, abodes etc., clothes, ornaments, embellishments etc. are unbearable to him. To a person who feeds himself properly, all these are certainly tolerable.

36-37. Hence a gift equal to that of food has never been seen before, nor will ever be seen in future.

He who has not made the gift (of food) in the month of Vaiśākha to a Brāhmaṇa who plods his weary way, shall be born on the earth as a ghost eating his own flesh. Hence cooked food must be given to Brāhmaṇas in accordance with one's affluence.

38. O king, the giver of cooked food makes (the recipient) forget his own parents and others (but not the giver of food). Hence all the people residing in the three worlds praise cooked food.

39. Mothers and fathers are mere causes of birth. Learned men in the world say that the giver of food is the (real) father.

40. All the Tīrthas are present in one who gives cooked food. All the deities are present in one who gives cooked food. O conqueror of the realms of enemies, all virtues are present in the giver of food.

CHAPTER THREE

Charitable Gifts (Continued)

Nārada said:[1]

1-6. If a person gives a cot to an excellent Brāhmaṇa where he lies (can lie) down happily and comfortably enjoying the cool breeze, that person attains freedom from all ailments in his body that is a means to achieve Dharma.

By giving it he gets rid of all distress and becomes free from sins. He attains the state of unbroken (bliss) which is very difficult for even Yogins to attain.

After giving very excellent cot that dispels weariness, to the Brāhmaṇas tired and distressed due to the heat (of the sun) in the month of Vaiśākha, O lord of men, one never languishes in the world on account of births, deaths, old age etc.

If a Brāhmaṇa accepts a cot and lies down on it all through his life, all the sins (of the donor) whether committed knowingly or unknowingly perish, O great king, like camphor in contact with fire. That man certainly attains absorption in Brahman if the Brāhmaṇa lies on it.

7-10a. If a person gives food and clothing in the month of Vaiśākha (in) which Hari likes the holy bath, that person will be endowed with all kinds of worldly pleasures in that very birth. Along with his family he certainly remains unafflicted with ailments etc. He obtains longevity, very sound health, fame and fortitude. Till a hundred generations are over, no unrighteous person is born in his family. He will die only after enjoying all worldly pleasures. After getting rid of all sins, he attains salvation.

10b-13a. If a person gives to a prominent Brāhmaṇa well-versed in the Vedas, a pillow without which no man can sleep happily anywhere, he shall enjoy a kingdom on the earth after becoming the supporter of all. Again and again he will enjoy all pleasures and will be devoted to virtue. For seven births, O great king, he will be all-conqueror. Thereafter, he becomes competent to go to

1. The last chapter discussed the meritorious nature of charitable gifts of food, water, shelter and other amenities which relieve the oppressive heat of Vaiśākha. This chapter describes the importance of the gift of a cot, bedstead (vv 1-13a), mats, blankets (vv 13b-18) and other things helping to minimise the heat-effects of Vaiśākha.

the world of Brahmā accompanied by the members of his family up to seven generations.

13b-15. If a person gives a grass-mat or any other kind of mat, Viṣṇu himself shall lie down there. Parameśvara will stay there. Just as wool soaked in water is not broken or ruffled by the water, so also that person living in the mundane world is not bound to the worldly existence. The person who gives a mat is in every respect happy while engaged in sitting or lying down on it (?).

16. If a person offers shelter (like a caravanserai) and gives a mat and a blanket for the purpose of lying down, he shall become liberated by that much alone. No doubt need be entertained in this respect.

17. Misery is dispelled by means of sleep. Fatigue is dispelled by means of sleep. The sleep of a person lying on a mat becomes sound and happy surely.

18. O king, he who gives a blanket in the month of Vaiśākha at the advent of the spring season shall become free from premature or accidental death. He will live for a hundred (years).

19. He who gives clothes of fine texture to a good Brāhmaṇa afflicted with heat, shall attain full span of life and the highest goal hereafter.

20. By giving excellent camphor that dispels internal heat, to a Brāhmaṇa, one attains salvation. His miseries are all over.

21. He who gives flowers and saffron to a Brāhmaṇa, shall become an emperor, a ruler who will win over all the peoples.

22-24a. He shall enjoy all worldly pleasures with sons, grandsons etc. and shall attain salvation.

Sandalpaste dispels instantaneously heat and distress of skin and bones. By giving it (sandalpaste) one shall be free from the threefold distress and shall attain salvation.

He who gives the different kinds of unguents, viz. Auśīra*, Cāṣaka (?) and Kauśa (?) rendered fragrant by the addition of water, shall have the assistance of Devas, O great king, in (the enjoyment of) worldly pleasures.

24b-25. His sins will be destroyed and miseries will disappear. He shall attain the supreme bliss of salvation. If the devotee conversant with the religious duties in the month of Vaiśākha gives *Goroca* (yellow orpiment) and musk, he shall be rid of the three-

* Prepared from the roots of *Andropogon muricatus.*

fold distress. He shall attain the greatest bliss of salvation.

26. He who gives betel leaves with camphor when the Sun is in Aries, shall share the happiness of an emperor and then attain the highest bliss of salvation.

27. A man who gives blue lotus and jasmine in the month of Meṣa becomes an emperor. Afterwards he attains salvation.

28. He who gives Ketakī or Mallikā at the time of the advent of vernal season shall attain salvation at the behest of the Slayer of Madhu.

29. Listen to the fruit or reward enjoyed by that person, O king, who does the good work of giving arecanuts, coconuts and sweet scents to a Brāhmaṇa.

30. For seven births he shall be a Brāhmaṇa endowed with wealth. He shall be a master of the Vedas. Afterwards, accompanied by seven generations of his family, he shall go to the world of Viṣṇu.

31. O king, I am unable to recount the fruit enjoyed by that person who erects a pavilion for rest and recreation and gives it to a Brāhmaṇa.

32. He who makes a pavilion with good shade, with sand scattered properly and endued with a *Prapā* (shed for free supply of water) shall become ruler of the world.

33. He who makes parks along the highways, digs lakes and wells, and erects pavilion, is a righteous-souled one. Of what use are sons to him?

34-36. *Santāna* (progeny) is proclaimed to be of seven types: a well, a lake, a park, a pavilion, *Prapā*, performing holy rites and a son. If at least one of these is not present, men do not go up (to heaven).

Excellent men conversant with everything know that these seven are to be known as *Santāna* (progeny): listening to good holy texts, pilgrimage to Tīrthas, association with good people, gift of water, gift of cooked food, planting the seedlings of Aśvattha (holy fig tree) and a son.

37. One without *Santāna* cannot attain higher worlds, though he may perform hundreds of holy rites. Hence one shall seek *Santāna*. He should go in for one among the *Santānas*.

38-40. None among animals, birds, deer and trees goes easily to the higher world. How can we expect it from human beings!

If one gives excellent betel leaves along with arecanuts, cam-

phor and agallochum, one is liberated from all bodily sins. There is no doubt about it. The person who gives *Tāmbūla* (collection of all the above) certainly obtains fame, courage and glory.

41-46. If a sick man gives it, he shall be free from illness. A healthy man who gives it shall attain salvation.

He who gives buttermilk that is destructive of heat and distress in the month of Vaiśākha, becomes learned and wealthy on the earth.

There is no other gift on a par with that of buttermilk in summer season. Hence buttermilk should be given to a Brāhmaṇa weary on the way.

He who gives buttermilk mixed with the excellent juice of Jambīra (citron fruit) and fine salt which removes loss of appetite, shall attain salvation.

O king, I am not capable of recounting the fruit enjoyed by that person who gives curds in the month of Vaiśākha for quelling heat.

He who gives excellent rice (in the month of Vaiśākha) that is a favourite of Viṣṇu, shall obtain full span of life. He shall obtain the fruit of all Yajñas.

He who gives ghee from cow's milk which is a form of *Tejas* (fire element), to a Brāhmaṇa, obtains the fruit of a horse-sacrifice and rejoices in the world of Viṣṇu.

47. (He who gives) a mixture of tender cucumber and jaggery in the month of Vaiśākha when the Sun is in Aries, shall be rid of all sins and certainly live in Śvetadvīpa.

48. Infinite is the merit of that person who gives a Brāhmaṇa a sugarcane stump in the evening or during the day, for the sake of cessation (cooling) of heat and distress.

49. By giving *Pānaka* (mixture of water and treacle) in the evening in the month of Vaiśākha for alleviating fatigue, one shall be rid of all sins. He shall obtain *Sāyujya* with Viṣṇu.

50. One should give Pānaka along with fruits in the evening in the month of Meṣa to a Brāhmaṇa. Thereby the Pitṛs shall have a drink of nectar undoubtedly.

51. If anyone gives Pānaka mixed with fully ripe mango fruits in the month of Vaiśākha, all his sins shall certainly perish.

52. If anyone gives a (big) pot full of Pānaka juice on the new-moon day in the month of Caitra, undoubtedly a hundred Gayāśrāddhas have been performed by him.

53. On the new-moon day in the month of Caitra, a man should give on behalf of the manes, a potful of Pānaka mixed with musk, camphor, jasmine and the fragrant root of the plant *Andropogon muricatus*. It is as good as offering ninety-six Śrāddhas.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Holy Rites to be Observed in Vaiśākha

Nārada said:

1-6. One who observes vows during the month of Vaiśākha shall avoid the (following) eight acts[1]: smearing the body with oil, sleeping during day-time, taking food in a bell-metal vessel, sleeping on a cot, taking bath in the house, eating forbidden food, taking food twice a day and taking food at night.

He who observes the vows in the month of Vaiśākha and takes his meal on a lotus leaf, shall be rid of sins. He shall go to the world of Viṣṇu.

One shall wash the feet of Brāhmaṇas who are tired at midday in the month of Vaiśākha. That shall be a holy rite, the most excellent one among all holy rites.

If a Brāhmaṇa fatigued by travelling on foot comes to one's house at midday and if one makes that Brāhmaṇa occupy a beautiful seat and washes his feet and sprinkles that water over his (own) head, he shall have all the fetters (of Saṁsāra) broken down. He is certainly on a par with that person who has taken his holy bath in Gaṅgā and all other Tīrthas.

7. A person who does not take bath in the month of Vaiśākha, one who passes the month of Vaiśākha without taking food on Palāśa leaf, shall be reborn first as a donkey and thereafter as a mule.[2]

8. If a healthy man of a strong constitution, devoid of ail-

1. VV 1-6 enumerate the don'ts and dos in Vaiśākha.
2. VV 7-11 describe the punishment for violation of the Vrata-injunctions of Vaiśākha.

ments, takes bath in the house during Vaiśākha, he shall attain rebirth in the womb of a Cāṇḍāla woman.

9. O great king, if a person does not take bath outside (i.e., in rivers, lakes etc.) in the month of Vaiśākha when the Sun is in Aries, he shall be born as a dog a hundred times.

10. If the month of Vaiśākha is passed without the stipulated baths and charitable gifts, the person shall certainly become a ghost. By not observing the holy rites pertaining to the month of Vaiśākha, one shall go down (i.e. become degraded).

11. A man of greedy mind who does not offer water and cooked food in the month of Vaiśākha, never gets his sins and miseries destroyed. There is no doubt about it.

12. He who is devoted to Viṣṇu and takes bath in a river in the month of Vaiśākha, is liberated from the sins accumulated in the course of three births. There is no doubt about it.

13. If a person takes his bath at sunrise[1] in a river that flows into a sea, he shall at the very instant be released from sins acquired in the course of seven births.

14-15. Jāhnavī (Gaṅgā), Vṛddhagaṅgā (Būḍhī Gaṅgā), Kālindī (Yamunā), Sarasvatī, Kāverī, Narmadā and Veṇī (Kṛṣṇā)—these are glorified as the "Seven Gaṅgās". A man who takes his holy bath early in the morning in (anyone of) the "Seven Gaṅgās" is liberated from the sins acquired in the course of a crore of births. There is no doubt about this.

16. A person who takes the holy plunge in the morning during the month of Vaiśākha in natural reservoirs of water, shall be liberated from the sins committed ever since his birth. There is no doubt about this.

17. He who, at the advent of the month of Vaiśākha, takes his bath in wells (outside the house) in the morning, gets (his) great sins destroyed.

18-20. It is certain that all the rivers including Gaṅgā are present in water-receptacles outside, even if they be small like the pits made by cows' hoofs. He who realizes this, attains the benefit more than from all the Tīrthas.

(Just as) Milk is superior to water, O king, curd is superior to

1. VV 13-19 describe the meritorious effects of morning bath, especially outside one's house.

milk and ghee superior to curd, so Kārttika is superior to the other months, the month of Māgha is superior to Kārttika and Vaiśākha is superior to Māgha. The holy rite performed in that month grows like the (minute) seed of a banyan tree (into a big tree).

21-22. A man may be rich or extremely poor or dependent, but whatever object he obtains should be given to a Brāhmaṇa, whether it is a bulb, root, fruit, vegetable, salt, jaggery, jujube fruit, leaf, water or buttermilk. It is conducive to infinite benefit.

23-28a. Nowhere does a man get anything if it has not been given by him (previously), not from even Devas including Brahmā. One who has never given charitable gifts will become indigent. Due to poverty he commits (further) sin. Due to sinfulness he falls into hell. Hence charitable gifts should be made by one who wishes for happiness.

Just as a house endowed with all good features is not (considered) splendid if it is devoid of goods and chattels, so also holy rites and pious observances performed in all the months go in vain, if the vows of the month of Vaiśākha are not observed.[1]

Just as a girl though endowed with all good qualities and features (does not shine) should she not have a living husband, so also a holy rite may be perfect in every detail with all ancillaries, but they know that it is futile if it is bereft of the Vaiśākha vows.

Just as all other qualities are futile if there is no mercifulness, so also all holy rites are futile if they are without the Vaiśākha vows. A vegetable dish may have all the good features and ingredients, but it is not relished if there is no salt therein. Similarly a meritorious deed unconnected with Vaiśākha should not be resorted to by good people. Nor is it conducive to the attainment of the good.

28b-30. A young woman may be exceedingly beautiful and may have all the ornaments, but she does not shine without (adequate) clothing. So also a series of holy rites performed exceedingly well by men does not shine without the Vaiśākha rites. So it is decided that holy rites are to be performed in the month of Vaiśākha by all means by every type of living being.

With the Slayer of Madhu in view, the devotee shall take holy bath in the morning when the Sun is in Aries and then worship Viṣṇu. Otherwise he will fall into hell.

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1. VV 25-30: importance of observing rites in Vaiśākha.

31-32. There was a king named Mahīratha.[1] He was lecherous and lustful without any control over his passions. But due to holy ablution in the month of Vaiśākha he went to Vaikuṇṭha directly. Vaiśākha is a beneficial month with Madhusūdana as the deity. It yields more benefit for (the various holy rites such as) pilgrimages, austerities, Yajñas, charitable gifts and Homas.

The Mantra for prayer:

33. "O Madhusūdana, O lord of the Devas, I shall take the holy bath in the morning in the month of Vaiśākha when the Sun is in Aries. Make it free from hindrances, O Mādhava."

The Mantra for Arghya:

34. "In the month of Vaiśākha when the Sun is in Aries, I am engaged in the early morning ablution. I shall give you *Arghya*. Accept it, O Madhusūdana.

35. O ye all rivers including Gaṅgā, accept the *Arghya* offered by me. O Tīrthas and whirlpools, accept the *Arghya* offered by me. Be well pleased.

36. O Yama, you are the leader. You are the chastiser of sinners. You view (everyone) impartially. Accept the *Arghya* offered by me. Be the bestower of the benefit mentioned."

37-39. The devotee should offer *Arghyas* thus and then take the holy bath. He then wears two clothes and performs all the rites. He worships Madhusūdana with flowers growing in the vernal season. He shall then listen to the divine narratives and anecdotes of Viṣṇu praising this month. He shall be liberated from sins acquired in the course of a crore of births and attain salvation.

40. He will never undergo distress on the earth, neither in heaven nor in the nether worlds. He is not born anywhere again in any womb. He does not suck the breasts further (i.e. is liberated).

41. One who takes food in a bell-metal vessel in the month of

1. For the story of Mahīratha see PdP V (Pātāla Khaṇḍa), Ch. 99. The king improved his conduct and performed Vaiśākha-rites. After death he expressed his desire to see hells. When he went to have a view, the hellish beings felt happy. Seeing their plight, the king offered his merit of Vaiśākha-rites and then the hellish beings went to heaven and only after their redemption the king agreed to go to Vaikuṇṭha.

Vaiśākha, one who does not listen to good stories, one who does not take holy bath or make charitable gifts, falls into hells.

42-47. Somehow the sin of killing a thousand Brāhmaṇas can be dispelled, but the sin of that person who has not taken holy bath in the month of Vaiśākha can never be dispelled. That base man is undoubtedly dead though living, who does not take holy bath in the month of Vaiśākha, though he has his body under his control, can freely enter and stay in water and his tongue is free enough to utter the two syllables *HA-RI* (but does not do so). If a stupid and deluded soul does not worship Madhusūdana in the month of Vaiśākha, by some means or the other, he shall be reborn as a pig. He who worships Madhusūdana in the month of Vaiśākha with Tulasī leaves, shall become an emperor and enjoy pleasures in a crore of births. Afterwards, he attains *Sāyujya* with Viṣṇu along with a crore of the members of his family. The devotee shall serve Viṣṇu both *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* (with or without attributes) by means of different paths of devotion. He shall meditate upon him always with the mind not dwelling on anything else.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Excellence of Vaiśākha

Ambarīṣa said:

1. Why should Vaiśākha be considered to be superior to all the other months and special holy rites, austerities, charitable gifts and all the other types of pious observances (enjoined during its course)?

Nārada replied:

2-4. Let me tell you, O highly intelligent one. Listen with single-minded attention.

At the end of the Kalpa, the great Lord, the Lord of Devas, lies on his couch of Śeṣa, the Serpent. With all the groups of worlds inside his belly, he lies down in the vast sea of Pralaya. All the

different categories (of worldly objects), the multifarious things, become unified into one mass due to his yogic Māyā and the superior powers. At the end of the slumber he is awakened by the Śrutis. The Lord, the storehouse of mercy, protected all the groups and species of beings stationed in his belly.

5. He became inclined to create in order to enable the living beings to experience the fruits of their respective Karmas. From his navel arose a golden lotus, support of all the worlds.

6. He created Brahmā, Vairāja (son of Virāṭ), called Puruṣa. In him the Lord created the fourteen worlds.

7-11. He created various groups of living beings of different activities and mental proclivities. He created three Guṇas, Prakṛti, boundaries and overlords. He made the distinctions (in the duties) of the different castes and stages of life. He defined Dharma.

He made the sages the custodians of Dharma. The great Lord made them active workers in the propagation and protection of Dharma according to the four Vedas, Tantra texts, Smṛtis, Purāṇas and Itihāsas all in the form of his commands. The duties propagated by them are based on the distinction of castes and stages of life. All the people had faith in the Dharmas befitting them and giving delight to Viṣṇu.

In order to ensure proper functioning of (the system of) the stages of life, the immutable Lord is stationed in the heart itself. Still (he manifests himself outside) in order to test and frighten (people) (lest they should cease performance of their duties).

12. The wise Lord thought thus: 'What can be that time when the people will perform all the excellent Dharmas perfectly?

13-14. The rainy season has been created by me. People are afflicted and helpless then. Obstructed by mud etc. they are unable to perform excellent Dharmas.

On seeing them anger alone will arise in me. I shall not be delighted with them. Let not the people looked at by me become disturbed and helpless. Hence I do (should) not see them.

15-16. In autumn too there is no fulfilment (of the needs) because of agricultural activities. Some are eagerly attached to ripe fruits. Some are afflicted by heavy showers and some by chillness. On seeing them I (may) become furious indeed. It does not give me any satisfaction, when I notice lack of good qualities.

17-20. When early winter season sets in, people do not wish to get up early in the morning. I become angry on seeing that people

do not get up even when the sun has risen.

In the same manner people are distressed in the morning during late winter. So also they are not capable of taking in ripe fruits with care. Further they are afflicted by chillness and they are worried about the early morning ablution. There shall be omission of duties on their part. It will never be recompensed in any manner. This is not the time for survey.' Thus the Lord became agitated in his mind. He considered vernal season to be one dispelling all calamities.

21. "In performing holy bath, charitable gifts, in Yajña, in holy rites, in the enjoyment of pleasures and in the execution of different kinds of pious observances and vows, this season is favourable.

22-27. Certainly (some) objects would be accessible to living beings without much strain. Whatever object will satisfy embodied beings for whom Viṣṇu is the support, that object is the means of acquiring virtue and piety to them, since they are endowed with devotion. In vernal season all objects are conducive to happiness to living beings. Those objects are worthy of being distributed as charitable gifts, worthy of holy rites and also of being enjoyed in every respect. There is no doubt about this, that poor people, those who are lame and those who are disabled in other limbs, as well as noble-souled ones (without valuable possessions) can easily get the things such as water etc. My devotees (lit. to whom I am dear) perform holy rites conducive to their own welfare with such things as leaves, flowers, fruits, vegetables and other things, with pleasing words, with flower garlands, betel leaves, sandalpaste and other things, by washing the feet and similar rites and with humility etc. Thereby I become the bestower of boons on them." Thinking and speaking thus (to Ramā), Lord Viṣṇu started along with Ramā.

28-32. He went along surveying the forests and full-blown flowers. He saw places inhabited by delighted and well-nourished people and resorted to by inebriated bees and birds.

He saw the beautiful courtyards of the rich hermitages of the residents of forests and villages. He saw gardens and vast lands.

He pointed out all these to Ramā. Viṣṇu was eulogized by Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Serpents and Rākṣasas as well as by Devas and eminent sages. Thus he visited the houses of those householders who followed the system of castes and stages of life. Beginning with the month of Mīna and ending with the

month of Karkaṭa, he stayed there along with Ramā and Suras.

He tested people by the services (and offerings) perfo*r*med or omitted. There he gives to the persons endowed with virtue all their cherished things.

33-36. He does not brook haughty, intoxicated men. He deprives them of their span of life, wealth etc.

In the month of Vaiśākha they perform worship of the Supreme Ātman. The Lord brooks it even if omission of rites happens in the other months in the case of good men who have been otherwise constant.

If people in the outlying districts go and serve the king who goes over to their land, offer him presents and humble obeisance, then the king ignores the deficiencies and shortages in their payment of taxes and tributes. He considers it as paid in full as it were. Further, he becomes pleased with them and certainly gives them something more also.

37-39. If they do not revere and worship him, he metes out punishment too. In the same manner, Viṣṇu behaves with his own people in the month of Vaiśākha during the advent of the vernal season. To the persons who offer him worship, he grants all cherished things. In the case of those persons who do not perform obeisance etc. he deprives them of their wealth etc.

This is the time when the Lord of Devas, the Śārṅga-bearing Viṣṇu, the protector of Dharma, tests the devotees. Hence this is the most excellent of all months.

CHAPTER SIX

The Story of a House-Lizard

Nārada said:

1. O king, one who does not offer water in the month of Vaiśākha to those who are excessively thirsty and tired of journey over a long way, shall be born as an animal (in lower species).

2. In this connection they cite the following old story and a very wonderful dialogue between a Brāhmaṇa and a house-lizard.

3. Formerly in the family of Ikṣvāku, there was a king named

Hemāṅga.[1] He was a benefactor of Brāhmaṇas. He was exceedingly munificent. He had conquered enemies and had all the sense-organs perfectly under his control.

4. He gifted away as many cows as there are particles in the earth, as there are drops of water (in seas etc.) and as there are stars in the sky.

5. The whole earth became splendid with plenty of Kuśa grass as they were left strewn by him after his Yajñas were over. Many Brāhmaṇas were propitiated by him with the donation of cows, lands, gingelly seeds, gold and other things.

6. It is well-known that there were no charitable gifts not made by him. Of course, water was the sole thing not given by him, O king, because he thought that it was easily available.

7-8. He was advised by Vasiṣṭha, the noble-souled son of Brahmā. Yet he argued, "What fruit can a donor acquire—a donor of a valueless thing which is available everywhere?" With this wrong notion and arguments in support thereof, he did not offer water to any Brāhmaṇa. His statement (apparently) well-founded was, "There shall be merit in giving what is not available."

9. He worshipped Brāhmaṇas wanting in limbs, poor Brāhmaṇas and those devoid of means of livelihood. He did not adore those Brāhmaṇas who were well-versed in the Vedas, were knowers of truth and those who expounded Brahman.

10-11. 'All people will worship well-reputed persons, offering them rich presents. Who will help the helpless ones—Brāhmaṇas without learning, those disabled ones without limbs and the poor ones? Hence they deserve sympathy.' Thinking thus he, of his own accord, offered some (wealth) to undeserving persons (without the concurrence of his preceptor).

12-15. On account of this great sin the king became a Cātaka bird in the course of three births, a vulture in one birth, and a dog in the course of seven births. Afterwards he was born as a house-lizard in the abode of a king of Mithilā named Śrutakīrti. O king, he sustained himself by feeding on insects. That evil-minded one remained thus in the loft of the inner apartment for eighty-seven years.

1. The story of King Hemāṅga illustrates how free offer of water in Vaiśākha is superior to all other gifts, Yajñas etc. and refusal to do it leads to terrible punishment. Neither PE nor Mbh record any such king. The names may be imaginary but they emphasize the importance of gifts of water.

Once an excellent sage named Śrutadeva, well-versed in the Vedas, came to the abode of the king of Videha at midday.

16-17. On seeing him the king was highly delighted. He got up promptly and adored him with *Madhuparka* and other things offered by way of reception. He sprinkled over his own head the water with which he washed his feet. As good luck would have it, the house-lizard too was sprinkled with a few drops.

18. Immediately the lizard could remember (previous births). Having remembered the previous Karmas, it became exceedingly distressed. It cried and prayed, "Save me, save me" to the Brāhmaṇa who had come to that abode.

19-20. The Brāhmaṇa was surprised on hearing the sound of a being of lower stratum. He asked: "O lizard, where are you crying from? What Karma has brought you to this condition? Are you a Deva, an ordinary man, a king or a Brāhmaṇa? Tell me who you are, O highly blessed one. To-day I shall redeem you."

21-28a. On being asked thus the king spoke to Śrutadeva of great intellect: "I am born of the race of Ikṣvāku. I was an expert in the Vedas and scriptural texts. I had gifted away as many cows as there are particles in the earth or as there are drops of water (in seas etc.) or as there are stars in the sky. All the Yajñas were performed by me. I performed acts of public utility such as digging lakes, wells etc. Charitable gifts were given and the rites due for the month of Vaiśākha were performed. Still I have fallen in this miserable state to suffer instead of (being rewarded with) a higher status. Three times I was born as a Cātaka bird and once as a vulture. Previously, O Brāhmaṇa, birth as a dog had been gone through by me seven times. As this king sprinkled himself with the water after washing your feet, some drops fell on me accidentally. Thereby I have been reminded of the previous births. All the sins of mine have been dispelled. I have yet to take twenty-eight births as a house-lizard. They appear to have been ordained by fate. I am extremely afraid of the same. I do not see any reason therefor. Explain to me fully."

28b-31. On being told thus that sage saw everything with his vision of perfect knowledge and said: "Listen, O king. I shall tell you the reason for your birth in the lower species of beings. Water was not offered by you in the month of Vaiśākha, of which Lord Viṣṇu is fond. Since water is easily available, you decided that it was worthless. Due to your ignorance even in summer season

water was not offered by you to wayfarers and Brāhmaṇas. Further, you made charitable gifts to undeserving persons, ignoring deserving ones. Oblations are never offered on ash after leaving aside blazing fire.

32-33. A tree may have different colours. It may possess sweet fragrance etc. But if it is overgrown with thorns, no one adores it. Among excellent trees Aśvattha has attained the status of one worthy of being resorted to. Is an egg-plant worshipped after setting aside a Tulasī plant?

34. Helplessness is no criterion for worship. Those helpless persons such as lame and disabled ones are merely to be pitied.

35. Those who strictly adhere to penance, those who possess perfect knowledge, those who are experts in the Vedas and scriptures are like Viṣṇu incarnate. They should be worshipped always and never the others.

36. There too, those Brāhmaṇas who are endowed with perfect knowledge are always great favourites of Viṣṇu. O king, Viṣṇu too is always loved by persons having perfect knowledge. Hence a man with knowledge is worthy of being adored. He is remembered as the greatest among those who are worthy of being worshipped.

37. Contempt of persons of excellent conduct leads to misery both here and hereafter. Service rendered to great men is the cause of achievement of the aims of life.

38. Even if crores of blind people (join together), they will not be able to see things as they really exist. In the same manner even an association of ten thousands of dull-witted persons cannot be fruitful in any manner.

39. Tīrthas are not mere waters; the deities are not mere clay or stone. As for good men, they sanctify merely by their sight but only after lapse of a great deal of time.

40. Those who are well trained by them do not become distressed, thanks to the service rendered to good men, just as the persons nourished with nectar are not afflicted with births, deaths, old age etc.

41. O scion of the family of Ikṣvāku, water was not offered by you, nor were good men served. Therefore, this misfortune (birth in a low species) has befallen you.

42. For the purpose of quelling the evil and attaining peace, I shall give you all the merit acquired by me through the holy rites performed by me in Vaiśākha. Thereby you will get rid of all the

evil fruits of the past, present and future Karmas."

43-46. After saying this and ceremoniously sipping water he donated the excellent merit. When (the merit of) the holy bath taken in the course of a day was gifted away by the Brāhmaṇa, that king had all his sins quelled. He cast off the body of the house-lizard. He had divine garlands, garments and ornaments. Even as all the living beings were watching, he stood with palms joined in reverence within the mansion of the king of Mithilā. He circumambulated them and bowed down to them. On being permitted by them the king got into a divine aerial chariot. Eulogized by the immortal ones he went to heaven.

47. There without any lethargy (lustily) he enjoyed great pleasures for ten thousand years. The great lord himself was reborn in the Ikṣvāku-race as Kākutstha.[1]

48. That great lord was a part of Viṣṇu. He was a friend of Devendra. He protected the entire earth consisting of seven continents. He was a patron of Brāhmaṇas and was honoured by good people.

49. Enlightened by Vasiṣṭha, he performed all the fine rites prescribed for (to be performed in) Vaiśākha. Thereby he got rid of all the inauspiciousness and evils.

50-52. After attaining divine knowledge he obtained salvation in the form of *Sāyujya* with Viṣṇu. Hence Vaiśākha is auspicious. If the rites are performed by all men, Vaiśākha bestows longevity, fame and affluence. It is destructive of masses of great sins. It is the cause of the achievement of all aims of life. Viṣnu becomes pleased hereby.

In the month of Vaiśākha, during vernal season great holy rites are to be performed by all men of the four castes as well as four stages of life.

1. Kākutstha: a descendant of Kakutstha. The author probably means Kakustha, son of Śaśāda (and not Kākutstha), as he was 'a friend of Indra'. VāP, II.26.24-25 records how he helped Indra against Asuras—a feat eulogized by Kālidāsa in *Raghuvaṁśa*, VI.71. Kakustha's greatness is attributed to the fructification of the merit of *Vaiśākha-Vrata* performed in his past birth.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Salvation of a Piśāca (Goblin)

Nārada said:

1. On seeing that miracle the king of Mithilā was very much surprised. With palms joined in reverence, the most excellent one among those conversant with Dharma (Virtue), spoke these words to (the sage) who was comfortably seated.

Maithila said:

2-3. This great miracle as well as the act of a saintly man has been witnessed. I am eager to hear in detail about that Dharma whereby this king, a scion of the family of Ikṣvāku, became a liberated soul. O learned one, I am endowed with faith. Kindly describe it in detail.

4. On being specifically asked thus by the king the noble-minded Śrutadeva said, "Good! Good!" and then addressed the excellent king thus:

Śrutadeva said:

5. O most excellent one among saintly kings, you are well-resolved. You have decided well, since you are inclined to hear about the holy rites well-liked by Vāsudeva.

6. Without merit acquired in the course of many births no embodied being can be interested to hear anecdotes of Vāsudeva.

7. (Even though) you are a young man and a king of kings, yet, your mind is inclined like this. Therefore, I consider you a pure Bhāgavata (a devotee of the Lord), the most excellent one among good people.

8. So I shall recount to you the holy Bhāgavata rites, O gentle Sir. By knowing (correctly understanding) these splendid rites a living being is liberated from the bondage of births and worldly existence.

9-10. The excellent holy rites of Vaiśākha are like various other rites such as those of cleanliness, holy bath, Sandhyā prayer, water libations, Śrāddha, Agnihotra.

Without performing the holy rites in the month of Vaiśākha in

vernal season one cannot rise up (to heaven etc.). Among all holy rites there is nothing on a par with Vaiśākha.

11. There are many other rites. They are like subjects without a king, who are assailed by calamities (i.e., these rites being easily violable yield only adverse results). There is no doubt about it.

12-21. But those laid down for being performed in Vaiśākha are easy. They are:[1] offering of water pot, construction of *Prapās* (sheds for free distribution of water), construction of shady places etc. (for travellers) on the way, gifts of footwear, umbrellas and fans, gingelly seeds in honey, milk-products for the alleviation of fatigue, erection of shelters for pedestrians, digging of wells, lakes, tanks etc., gift of coconuts, sugarcane, camphor and musk, sweet scents and unguents, gift of beds and cots, tasty mango fruit, sharbat (sweet drink) made of lemon juice, gift of *Damana* (*Artemisia indica*) flowers, gift of treacle juice in the evening, varieties of cooked rice on the full-moon day and cooked rice mixed with curds everyday, gift of betel leaves, gift of water pot on the new-moon day of Caitra, early morning bath everyday before sunrise, worship of Madhusūdana etc., listening to the story of the Lord, avoidance of oil bath, taking food on leaves, fanning off and on those people who are weary, daily worship of Hari by means of tender fragrant flowers, *Naivedya*, offerings of fruits and cooked rice mixed with curds, offerings of incense and light everyday, morsels of grass to cows, washing of the feet of Brāhmaṇas, gift of dried ginger mixed with jaggery, gift of powdered Emblic officinalis, shelter to wayfarers and gift of rice and vegetables. These are the holy rites praised and recommended for the month of Vaiśākha which is liked by Mādhava.

22. Offering flowers to Viṣṇu, worshipping Hari by means of sprouts etc. peculair to the season, and offering cooked rice as Naivedya is the cause of the destruction of all the masses of sins.

23. O noble-souled one, if a woman does not worship Mādhava either in a temple or in her house with the flowers growing in that season, she will never obtain a son or happiness anywhere. She will end the life of her husband or of herself.

24-26. In order to test the bridge of Dharma of the subjects in the month of Vaiśākha Viṣṇu goes to their abodes accompanied by

1. VV 12-21 enumerate the various Vratas to be performed in Vaiśākha.

Ramā, Devas and the sages. If at that time any stupid fellow does not worship him with flowers, he is a deluded soul. He falls into the Raurava hell. Afterwards he is reborn in the wombs of demonesses five times.

In this (month) cooked rice and drinking water should be given always to those who are afflicted with hunger. It is the cause of sustaining the vital airs.

By not giving drinking water he is reborn as a creature of lower species. By not giving cooked rice he is reborn as an evil spirit. I shall tell you a strange experience that I had in connection with non-gifting of cooked rice or food.

27-28. My father was born as an evil spirit on the banks of Revā.[1] He ate his own flesh when he became utterly exhausted with hunger and thirst. Due to lack of food he became too weak to move about. He was staying at the root of a silk cotton tree devoid of any shade. On account of excessive hunger and thirst and due to his past Karma the opening of the food pipe in his throat was very small. Pieces of flesh sticking to his throat gave him a lot of pain threatening his very life.

29-32a. By chance, on my way to Gaṅgā, I reached the bank of that river. He looked upon the cool water of a well as well as of a lake like Kālakūṭa poison. At the root of the Śālmalī tree I witnessed the surprising thing of his eating his own flesh cutting it bit by bit and lamenting in diverse ways. He was afflicted with hunger, thirst and sickness on account of his own Karmas.

I pitied him but on seeing me, that spirit of sinful activities rushed at me to kill. He was restrained on account of my splendour. He began to run away. With my mind melting with pity I told him: "Do not be afraid. I have given you freedom from fear. O dear one, who are you? Tell me immediately the reason for this. I shall set you free from this difficult situation. Do not be distressed."

32b-40. On being told thus, he said to me without knowing that I was his son: "Formerly I was in the city named Bhūvara ('most excellent on the earth') in the land of Ānarta (Northern Gujarat). My name was Maitra. I belonged to the Saṅkṛti Gotra. I regularly performed penance, Yajñas, charitable gifts etc. and I was learned too. All scriptures were learnt and taught by me. I took my holy

1. VV 27-44 describe the story how a Brāhmana Śrutadeva redeemed his own father from the state of Piśāca.

baths in all the Tīrthas. Out of greediness food was not given by me in the month of Vaiśākha; not even alms were given at that time. I now bemoan my lot after being born a Piśāca (Evil Spirit). There is no other cause. Oh! I have told you the truth. Now my son named Śrutadeva is in my house. He is very famous. My plight should be reported to that son of mine: 'Your father has become a Piśāca for not giving food in the month of Vaiśākha. He was seen on the banks of Narmadā. He has not gone up (to heaven). He is still at the root of the tree. He eats his own flesh and laments over it. For the sake of liberating your father you must take early morning bath in the month of Vaiśākha. After worshipping Viṣṇu and offering water libations to me (your father) sincerely, cooked food should be given to an excellent Brāhmaṇa possessing good qualities. He shall then be liberated and go to the region of Viṣṇu.' "

He further said, "Speak this to him; he shall have mercy on me. There is no doubt about it. Let there be welfare in every respect. Let there be auspiciousness in your case."

On hearing the speech of my father, I became miserable. Excessively agitated, I prostrated before him at his feet for a long time. With tears in my eyes and cursing myself I said: "O my father, I am your son. I have come here by chance. Since my manes have not been liberated from distress, I have fallen off from my duties. I deserve the censure of Brāhmaṇas. Tell me. What is that holy rite whereby you will be liberated? O eminent Brāhmaṇa, I shall perform it."

41-42. Then he whose mind was completely satisfied told me: "After performing your pilgrimage you should return home quickly. At the advent of the month when the Sun is in Aries, you should offer excellent cooked food as Naivedya to Viṣṇu. O noble-souled one, make some charitable gift to an excellent Brāhmaṇa. Thereby the whole family shall attain salvation."

On being commanded by my father, I completed my pilgrimage and returned home. I made gift of food in the month of Vaiśākha.

43-44. Hence my father was liberated. He came to me and blessed me. Seated in an aerial chariot he went to the world of the Lord of Śrī—the world that cannot be easily seen and from which those who have gone there once do not return.

Thus the charitable gift that has been enjoined in all the scriptures has been recounted to you. It is the essence of all Dharmas. It is highly virtuous.

What else do you wish to hear? Tell me. On hearing it I shall tell you everything. This is the truth.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Dakṣa's Yajña; Pārvatī's Birth etc.

Maithila said:

1-5. O Brāhmaṇa, since he did not offer water, the descendant of Ikṣvāku was reborn as a Cātaka three times. Afterwards he became a house-lizard in my abode.

Indeed this conforms to his Karma. He deserved it, since he did not do his duty. It was said (by you) that he was born as a vulture once and as a dog seven times. This appears to be improper to me. Good people were not injured or censured by him nor were pitiably helpless persons. Since he did not resort (to good people) he may certainly not have had the benefit thereof. Indeed his act did not amount to harassing others, because he had not caused harm to them.

How then was he born in a lower womb without any (genuine) cause? I am your disciple and a favourite as well. Dispel this doubt of mine.

6. On being asked thus by the king, Śrutadeva of great renown exclaimed "Good! Good!" and spoke these words:

Śrutadeva said:

7-11. O sinless king, I shall tell you what has been asked by you. The same was recounted to Pārvatī by Śiva on the spotless (pure) peak of Kailāsa.

After creating all these worlds, he evolved two ways of sustenance for them, viz. *Aihikī* (pertaining to this world), and *Āmuṣmikī* (pertaining to the other world).

Each of the two ways of sustenance has three factors. The *Aihikī* (this-worldly) consists of service through water, service through cooked food and service through medicine. Whatever these are, O highly fortunate one, they are the causes of sustenance in this world.

In the same manner, O king, three factors have been proclaimed in the Śruti, viz. service to good people, service to Viṣṇu and service to the path of virtue (*Dharma*). If these are acquired earlier (by anyone) they are the causes (of happiness) in the other world.

12. Just as the food prepared and got ready at the house serves one's purpose during the journey on the way, so also the *Aihikī* (this-worldly) causes serve their purposes immediately.

13. But, if something desirable and desired by the pious people becomes unbearable for any reason whatsoever, O king, it causes harm and injury.

14. Is it to be specially mentioned then as to what is displeasing to them? It is clear that it will cause misery. In this context they cite this ancient anecdote as an illustration.

15-22. It causes the destruction of sins. It is exceedingly wonderful. It causes horripilation to those who listen.

Formerly Dakṣa, the patriarch, got himself initiated for Yajña.[1] He went to the silver mountain (Kailāsa) in order to invite the Lord of goblins (i.e. Śiva). Śaṁbhu with a desire for his (Dakṣa's) own welfare did not get up on seeing him. (He thought thus:) 'I am the sire of all immortal ones. I am eternal and am approachable only through the Vedas. These leading Suras including Indra and Candra (Moon) are my servants who offer tribute to me. A master should not get up (on seeing) a servant; the husband should not get up for his wife; the preceptor should not get up for his disciple. This is the opinion of those who are conversant with the scriptures. Śruti lays down this also that an alliance (by way of marriage) is no cause for seniority at all. He whose strength, knowledge, power of penance and calmness are greater, shall be the senior to the others. The lower ones shall be the servants. If the master and other (seniors) get up on seeing the servants and others, out of excess of affection, the longevity, wealth, fame and progeny of those people perish immediately. I, therefore, shall not stand up as my father-in-law is dear to me.' Thinking thus with the welfare (of Dakṣa) in view, the Lord did not move at all from his seat. The Prajāpati became furious on seeing that Mṛḍa (Śiva) did

1. The story of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice after the self-immolation of his daughter (and Śiva's spouse) Satī, is told practically in every Purāṇa. Here the bias is towards the importance of *Vaiśākha-Vratas*. (See Mbh, *Śānti*, Chs. 283, 284; also PE 193 for other references.)

not rise up (from his seat).

23-30. In front of the Lord of the Daughter of the Mountain, he censured him in many ways: "Alas, the haughtiness! Alas, the haughtiness of the unlettered indigent fellow! An old bull reduced to mere skin is his asset, wealth; that is why he holds the skull bone. He is approachable to heretics. How can fortune grant him auspiciousness as he is proud for nothing! In this world the knowers understand pious acts only through their performance.

This poor fellow who is afflicted with chillness, wears the sacred hide of elephant. His abode is cremation ground and his ornaments, they say, are serpents. He has neither courage nor knowledge. Both of them had fled from him who is on a par with a wolf. He is always in close intimacy and association with goblins, ghosts, evil spirits and other vicious beings. Nothing is heard about his ancestry. He is not honoured by good people. Formerly I was wrongly led to believe in him by the vicious-minded Nārada. Urged by him I had given my daughter Satī to him. She too has become one following a separate Dharma. Let her stay happily in his house. Neither this fellow nor my daughter are to be approved of in any respect like the pot of a potter that has reached the hands of a Cāṇḍāla."

31. Thus Dakṣa of deluded soul did not invite Umā or Śiva. He scolded him in various ways and went home silently.

32. Thereafter, he went to the sacrificial chamber continuing to censure the great Lord. In the company of Rtviks and sages he performed the Yajña as per (sacrificial) procedure.

33. Excepting Brahmā and Viṣṇu, all the Devas arrived there. Siddhas, Cāraṇas and Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas and Kinnaras too came there.

34. At that time, Satī, the gentle and meritorious lady, was tempted due to her womanish fickleness. She became eager to witness the festival and meet the kinsmen who had assembled there.

35. Though she was prevented by Rudra, though she had been dishonoured and insulted (by her father), she decided to go due to the fickle nature of a woman.

36-38. (She was prevented by Śiva thus:) "O lady of excellent complexion, he censures me in the open assembly always. It is unbearable. On hearing it, it is true, you will forsake your own body. Though it is unbearable, I too have to bear it because I wish

to keep up the house (my family life?). O gentle lady, you are doing as I have done. Hence do not go to the sacrificial hall. Certainly nothing auspicious will befall you." Though urged thus, the goddess did not give up her fickleness.

39. Satī set out from the house alone on foot. On seeing her the Bull silently bore the goddess on his back.

40. Crores of groups of goblins followed Satī then. After going to the sacrificial chamber, she went at the outset to the apartments set apart for ladies.

41. (Everyone) kept quite on seeing Satī. With mental distress she set out from there. Recalling her husband's words, she went to the northern Altar.

42. On seeing her, her father and those who had assembled there stood silent without giving any blessing to her. She watched her father's performance of sacrifice till the time for Āhuti to Rudra. When her father proceeded dropping Rudra, she said with her eyes full of tears:

The goddess said:

43-47. Transgressing and insulting the great ones is not generally conducive to the welfare of persons. Rudra is the maker of the worlds. He is the administrator of the worlds. He is the immutable Lord of all. Still how is it that the *Havis* is not given to Rudra? Why? Why don't the others who have come here expose your evil intentions? Noble-souled ones do not behave thus. Is fate adverse to these?

As she spoke thus, Lord Pūṣan began to laugh. Bhṛgu whose auspiciousness had been destroyed, began to stir his moustache and beard. Others stroked their arms, legs, thighs and sides. Her unfortunate father censured her in various ways.

48-51. On hearing it, the wife of Rudra became extremely furious in her mind. In order to perform expiation for having heard it, Satī immolated her body in the sacrificial fire in the middle of the Altar, even as everyone stood looking on. There was a great hue and cry. The Pramathas ran immediately and reported all the details to the Lord of Devas.

On hearing it Rudra stood up suddenly. He became comparable to Kāla, the annihilator of the world. He plucked up his matted

hair with his hand and dashed it against the floor. Therefrom arose the exceedingly powerful Vīrabhadra of huge body with a thousand arms. He assumed the refulgence of Kāla, the annihilator (of the universe).

52-55. With palms joined in reverence he spoke to Hara then: "Employ me in the task for which I have been created." On being told thus, the infuriated Dhūrjaṭi (Śiva) spoke to Vīrabhadra who stood in front of him: "Do kill Dakṣa who has censured me and on account of whom my beloved wife killed herself. Let the groups of goblins and spirits of great strength go along with this (Vīrabhadra)."

On being commanded thus by the Lord, they all went to the sacrificial assembly. They struck all those great heroic Devas, Asuras, human beings and others.

56. Vīrabhadra who was born of the matted hair, broke the teeth of Pūṣan who had laughed. He uprooted the moustache of the vicious-minded Bhṛgu.

57. The powerful Vīrabhadra cut off the different limbs that had been stroked before. He exerted himself much in order to remove the head of Dakṣa.

58. As his head had been well-protected by the Mantras of the sages, it could not be cut off with force. Knowing it Hara himself came there and cut off the head of the wicked one.

59. After killing those who had come for the sacrifice, he went to his own abode along with his followers. Some who survived the slaughter, went and sought refuge in Brahmā.

60-61. Accompanied by them Brahmā went to Kailāsa, the abode of Śiva. With diverse kinds of words he pacified Rudra. The great Lord went along with him to the sacrificial chamber and resuscitated all those who had come to the sacrifice.

62. Then Śiva gave Khyāti the goat-head of Dakṣa(?). The goat-beard he gave to the noble-souled Bhṛgu.

63. He did not give back the teeth to Pūṣan but made him able to eat flour without teeth. Śiva straightened some of his limbs that had been distorted.

64-70. All of them attained welfare. The Yajña of the noble-souled one was begun again as before by Brahmā and Śiva. At the end of the Yajña, all the Devas went to their respective abodes. Rudra adopted a very severe vow of celibacy and performed a great penance. Rudra performed the great penance at the root of a Punnāga tree (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) on the banks of Gaṅgā.

The chaste goddess Satī, the daughter of Dakṣa, abandoned her body and was born again as the daughter of Menā and Himālaya. She grew up in his abode.

At this time the great Asura named Tāraka propitiated Brahmā Parameṣṭhin by means of severe penance. He chose the boon that he could not be killed by Devas, Asuras, human beings and serpents with weapons and all groups of missiles of great strength. Excepting a son of Rudra, the Daitya could not be killed by anyone. Such was the boon that Brahmā, the grandfather of the worlds, granted him saying "So be it", because Rudra had (then) no son and no wife too.

71. Receiving the boon, the demon went back to his abode and began to harass the worlds. For the work of cleansing the floor etc. in his abode Devas became his servants and Deva women were his servant maids.

72. Then Devas who were harassed by him sought refuge in Brahmā. On hearing about their misery described by them, Vedhas (Brahmā) said this to Suras:

73-75. "O Suras, at the time of granting the boon I have given the wicked one the boon that he could not be killed by anyone except a son of Rudra. Formerly Satī, the wife of Rudra, abandoned her body in the sacrifice. She was reborn as the daughter of Himālaya. She is known as Pārvatī. Rudra is engaged in a severe penance on the top of Himālaya. Unite Rudra, the Lord of the worlds, with Pārvatī."

76-77. Again, in the abode of Devendra, the Lord of Devas, the chastiser of Pāka had consultations with the leading Devas who had assembled there along with Dhiṣaṇa (Bṛhaspati). For the sake of his task he remembered Nārada and Smara. They came there and the enemy of Bala (i.e. Indra) spoke these words to him:[1]

78-81. "Kindly go to Himavān and enlighten him with your words: 'Your daughter was formerly Satī, the daughter of Dakṣa and wife of Hara. Separated from him, she is engaged in penance on your peak along with ten girl companions. Mṛḍa is also engaged in penance on your peak. Employ his beloved one in the service of Mṛḍa. She will become definitely his wife. He alone will be her husband.' "

1. The story of burning of Kāma, the god of Love, is another popular story told in Purāṇas. Bringing together Śiva and Pārvatī and shooting his arrow at him by Kāma was a clever plan though unfortunately it was not successful.

On being directed by Indra thus, Nārada approached the Mountain and did everything as directed by Devendra. Afterwards Indra called Kāma and spoke this to him:

82-84. "For the sake of the welfare of Devas and for the good of Mṛḍa too you go to the penance grove of Rudra accompanied by Vasanta (Spring Season). Manifest the features of Vasanta that cause flutter of love in the heart. When Goddess Pārvatī is near Mṛḍa, discharge your arrows and allure the great Lord (to her). When their union takes place our task shall become immediately fulfilled."

85. On being commanded thus, Smara said, "So will it be" and immediately set off. He went to that forest along with Rati, Vasanta and his entire retinue.

86-89. By means of his power, he created an untimely spring season throughout that beautiful forest, served by a gentle breeze.

Once the Lord of Devas was delighted with Pārvatī's service. He took her on his lap and began to speak to her something. Smara decided that it was the time for the Lord's union with his beloved wife. He took up his beautiful and delicate bow and stood behind Hara. Making a tree as his screen (to hide himself behind) he discharged an arrow. He fitted a second one too and exerted himself to discharge it.

90. Becoming agitated in his mind, Mṛḍa began to think, 'My mind will not waver thus at all. By whom has it been defiled?'

91-92. Worried thus, he turned and saw Kāma at his side. With great fury he opened his eye on the forehead and kept the goddess away from his lap. From his eye a blazing fire issued forth terrifying all the worlds. By it Manmatha was burned immediately along with his bow.

93-94. Observing the fulfilment (?) of their task and suspecting punishment to themselves, Devas, Vasanta and Rati fled to heaven.

The goddess became frightened. She closed her eyes and ran far off. In order to avoid the presence of a woman, Mṛḍa vanished from the scene.

95. Indra who was desirous of doing something pleasing to Rudra and at the same time what was conducive to his good, attained unfortunate result. One should expect the worse in the case of one who does something very displeasing!

96-99. Hence the descendant of Ikṣvāku, the dull-witted one, who was always unfavourable to saintly persons, did not perform

the rite of serving good people which would have been conducive to his own welfare.

Great misery was experienced by him and further he was born in a lower stratum of beings. Hence one should render service to good people, which accomplishes all purposes.

Since he did something displeasing to Rudra, Smara experienced misery very much in his next birth (though he was) a great lord.

Those who listen day and night to this meritorious legend shall undoubtedly be liberated from births, deaths, old age etc.

CHAPTER NINE

*The Birth of Kumāra**

Maithila said:

1-2a. O holy Sir, how was Kāma who had been burned born again? What was the misery that he experienced as a result of his Karma, i.e. offending Rudra. O Brāhmaṇa, recount this to me. I have great eagerness to hear.

Śrutadeva said:

2b-4. I shall narrate to you the birth of Kumāra, which, when listened to, is destructive of sins. It is conducive to fame and virtue. It grants sons and is destructive of all ailments.

When Kāma was killed by Śaṁbhu, his wife named Rati fainted on seeing her husband reduced to ash in front of herself. Within a Muhūrta she regained consciousness and lamented in various ways.

5-6. Due to her pitiable lamentation the forest too became equally miserable. She desired to cast off her body in the funeral pyre (of her lord). She remembered Mādhava (Spring), her husband's companion, in order to get the necessary work carried out. That great lord came in order to arrange for the funeral pyre on behalf of the wife of the hero.

7. On seeing his friend he became alarmed for a short while and was

* The birth of Kārttikeya after the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī is a favourite theme of all Purāna-writers His birth is also the theme of Kālidāsa's epic called *Kumārasaṁbhava*.

about to swoon. He then consoled Rati with many kinds of words of pacification.

8-9. "O gentle lady, I am like a son unto you. When I am present, it does not behove you to cast off your body which is the means of achieving Dharma." In spite of these and other words of pacification in diverse ways, she did not feel inclined to remain alive, though Rati was restrained by him (Vasanta). On seeing her firm decision, Vasanta arranged the funeral pyre on the banks of the river.

10-14. She took her plunge in the celestial river (i.e. Gaṅgā) and performed all the obsequies. She controlled all the sense-organs and concentrated her mind in the soul. She got ready to step on to the funeral pyre. Then an unembodied voice was heard: "O auspicious lady devoted to your husband, do not enter fire. Your husband will be reborn twice, once from Hara and later again from Viṣṇu in the form of a Yādava. There, in the latter case he will be born as Pradyumna, the son of Mahā-Viṣṇu Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī. Due to the curse of Brahmā you will stay in the abode of Śaṁbara. You will become united with your husband named Pradyumna."

After saying this, the ethereal speech ceased.

15. On hearing that voice she who had decided to die, gave up her resolve.

When Kāma was killed by Hara while acting on their behalf, Devas too came there.

16. On observing Rati's act Suras led by Guru (Jupiter), Indra and Fire made that chaste lady desist from it by means of great boons.

17. "Though he is *Anaṅga* (bodyless, having been reduced to ash) he shall become *Sāṅga* (possessing a body) and though dead he shall be visualized." Thus they made her refrain from (committing suicide) and advised her about her righteous duties.

18-21. "In the previous Kalpa he was a king named Sundara; he was a great lord. You alone were his wife then but caused a confused intermingling of Rajoguṇa (*rajaḥsaṅkarakāriṇī*?). That was why this plight befell you. Perform expiatory rites now. In the month of Vaiśākha take early morning bath in Gaṅgā.[1] Worship the Slayer of Madhu and listen to the divine narrative. O beautiful lady, begin the Vrata named *Aśūnyaśayana*[2] ('non-vacant bed'). By means of this pious act and

1. This is how Vaiśākha-Vratas are brought in this episode both in place and out of place.

2. *Aśūnya-Śayana-Vrata*: A Vaisnava Vrata to be observed on the 2nd day of the dark half of Śrāvana (for details see *Matsya Purāṇa*, Ch 67). It confers perpetual conjugal happiness.

through the Vrata of the Vaiśākha month you will certainly regain your husband. There is no doubt about this."

22-23. After granting her boons like these Devas went back in the manner they had come. That gentle lady, the chaste wife of Kāma, after surmounting the difficulty took her holy plunge in Gaṅgā when the Sun was in Aries. The noble-minded lady performed the Vrata of *Aśūnyaśayana* also.

24-27. By the power of that meritorious deed Kāma was immediately visualized by her, O great king. Kāma whose power was irresistible in the world was a king in the previous Kalpa. He was devoted to holy rites. But he did not perform the great holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha. Therefore, Smara met with the destruction of his body, though he was the son of the Supreme Soul. If the month of Vaiśākha when the Sun is in Aries is spent in vain, such is the plight of Devas even; still more so in the case of human beings.

Afterwards, when the Three-eyed Lord vanished, the Daughter of Mountain became desperate.

28. On seeing her bewildered and sitting quiet, Mountain Himavān became agitated, embraced her with his pair of arms and took her to his abode.

29-31. Observing the handsome features, liberal-mindedness and other qualities of the noble-souled Hara (the Daughter of Mountain) decided: "He alone shall be my husband."[1] Her mind was fixed to him. Observing holy rites, she came to the banks of Gaṅgā in order to perform penance, although she was prevented from it by her father, mother and other kinsmen. The goddess observed fast and kept matted hair and began to worship the great Liṅga. At the end of a thousand years according to the divine reckoning Maheśvara appeared before her.

32-34. The Lord assumed the form of a religious student and came to the entrance of the hut (one day) in the evening. By means of different kinds of words (of discussions) he knew the steadfastness of the mind of Pārvatī, which was fixed on him. The great Lord said, "O gentle lady, choose an excellent boon." That lady of excellent countenance requested Rudra, "You be my husband." After granting the same boon, he remembered the Seven Sages. They came and stood before him with palms joined in reverence.

1. The story of Pārvatī's performance of penance for Śiva, Śiva's interview with her, proposal of marriage to Himālaya, the marriage-ceremony of Śiva-Pārvatī have been favourite topics of Purāṇas and classical poets.

35-39. The Lord directed the Sages to request Himālaya on his behalf for the hand of his daughter. Commanded thus by the Lord they proceeded towards the abode of Himavān for the sake of his daughter. They travelled by air brightening the ten quarters and reached the abode of Himavān. The Mountain welcomed all the Seven Sages, the most excellent ones among the knowers of Brahman. He duly worshipped all of them. When they were comfortably seated he addressed them: "I am blessed. (I feel) I have fulfilled all my tasks since you people have come to my abode. I consider your arrival as the beneficial fruit of my birth. Noble-souled men who have realized all their objectives have not left anything for us to do. Still, recount to me what is to be done by me now." On being told thus they said to Himavān, the great Mountain:

40-43. "O Lord of Mountains, certainly a statement befitting yourself has been made by you. We shall mention the object of our arrival for your own prosperity. Your daughter named Pārvatī was formerly the daughter of Dakṣa, Satī (by name). After abandoning her body in the Yajña, she is reborn as your daughter. In all the three worlds none else but Śaṁbhu is competent to marry her. That goddess must be given (in marriage) to Śaṁbhu by you, if you wish for infinite benefit. In the course of thousands of your previous births good and meritorious deeds were performed by you. Fortunately now they have fructified."

44-47. On hearing their words the great Mountain became highly delighted in his mind. He spoke these words again: "Wearing bark garments and observing fast my daughter is engaged in a very severe penance on the banks of Gaṅgā. She is desirous of getting Śaṁbhu as her husband. Hence this (proposal) will be liked by her. My daughter has been (already) given to that noble-souled Three-eyed Lord. O holy Sirs, kindly go quickly to the place where Śaṁbhu, the great Lord, is present. Report to him, 'Accept (the daughter) lovingly offered by Himavān'. Let yourselves alone perform this marital rite."

48-52. On being told thus by Himavān they took leave of him and went to Śiva. All the ladies including Lakṣmī and all the Devas including Viṣṇu, the six Mothers (viz. Brāhmī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī, Cāmuṇḍā) went to witness the ceremony. Accompanied by all the groups of immortal ones, the sages and the Mothers and the groups of Pramathas, Śiva set out seated on his bull. There were various musical instruments such as Bherīs, Mṛdaṅgas, conchshells, trumpets, Paṭaha drums etc. Bards recited

poems. Sags chanted Vedic Mantras.* Thus Śiva entered the city of Himālaya. In an auspicious Muhūrta (auspicious hour) and in a splendid Lagna the Mountain celebrated the marriage with extremely delighted mind. O king, all the living beings in the three worlds were overjoyed.

53. When the festivities were over, Śaṅkara, the benefactor of the worlds, sported with the goddess as he pleased. He followed the ways of the world.

54-55. Śaṅkara had his sports in many places, e.g. in the luxurious, well-furnished abode of Himālaya, comparable to the abode of Devendra, on the banks of Nandinī and in the clusters of woods at night.

He sported in a park reverberating with the sounds of birds, peacocks and inebriated bees. The Lord thus sported as he pleased for a period of thousands of years according to divine reckoning.

56-59. At that time, O excellent king, women had not yet been granted boons by Indra. Hence subsequent intercourse with men caused miscarriage in women who had conceived earlier. Since Hara sported everyday, the goddess did not conceive at all.[1] Since no son could be begot by the Lord, Devas became worried. All of them joined together and consulted one another. "Hara, the Supreme Lord, is always attached to the goddess like a lustful one. Our task will not be fulfilled because of frequent miscarriage. Something should be done by us to prevent subsequent intercourse."

60. After discussing thus together, they began to seek (an expert for their job). Having decided that Agni (Fire-god) was the proper one, they spoke to him with due deference:

61-64. "O Agni, you are the mouth of Devas, you are our kinsman and resort. Now itself you go to that place where Hara sports about. At the end of the intercourse show yourself up so that there will be no further intercourse. On seeing you the goddess will shy away and will certainly go away from that place.

At the end of the intercourse be his disciple and ask the Destroyer of Smara about some point. Under the pretext of asking questions about various things see that a great deal of time is

*Auspicious Mantras like *svasti na indro* etc. of Punyāhavācana and others expressive of blessings.

1. This is why Agni was deputed to disturb the sexual intercourse of Śiva-Pārvatī. Unfortunately the plan flopped and Agni became pregnant. The story of transfer of foetus seems an explanation of why Skanda had six heads (Ṣaḍānana).

taken, O lord. After the lapse of much time the goddess will deliver Kumāra."

On being requested thus by Devas, Agni said "Yes" and went to Hara.

65-69. Even before the discharge of the semen virile in the middle of the intercourse itself, Agni went there. On seeing him the goddess who had no clothes on became ashamed and went away dejected, leaving off the sexual dalliance in a hurry. Thereupon Rudra became infuriated. He said to Agni, "Take this, O sinful and vicious one, my discharged and unbearable semen virile. There has been an interruption during the intercourse due to your presence. Hence, O Havyavāhana ('Bearer of oblations'), I am discharging the semen virile into your mouth."

After saying this, Hara released the semen virile into the mouth of Agni. Fire-god held that immensely powerful semen virile within his belly. He began to be burned thereby. Worried with this thought, he went to the abode of Devas. It was with very great difficulty that he could save his own life. He recounted it to the Devas.

70-72. On hearing what was said by Agni, the Devas experienced both delight and dejection. They were delighted because the semen virile had become established (into Fire-god). They were dejected because they did not know how to effect the delivery (of the child). The semen virile of Śaṁbhu within the belly of Agni grew up and ten months passed by. He did not know the means of delivering the child. Hence he became excessively unhappy. He sought refuge in the Devas for the release of the foetus.

73-75. Accompanied by Agni, those Devas went to the famous Gaṅgā. By means of eulogies and prayers they earnestly requested Gaṅgā : "You are the mother of all Devas. You alone are the sovereign of all the worlds. On behalf of Devas, O gentle lady, hold the semen virile of Śaṁbhu. The foetus grows and develops. But since Agni is not a woman, there has not been the delivery of the child. Hence redeem him as well as all of us. Take pity (on us)."

76. On being requested thus, the goddess spoke: "Let it be so."

The Devas imparted the Mantra for the release of the foetus.

77-80. Thanks (to the efficacy) of that Mantra, Fire-god left off the refulgent semen virile of Śaṁbhu into Gaṅgā, the semen virile that was highly unbearable to all the worlds. She held it for a few

months but could not continue beyond that on account of its great power. Her waters became dried up and her body became reddened. The goddess became exceedingly miserable. But thanks to the power of chastity, (Gaṅgā) the sole sanctifier of all the worlds cast off the foetus within her into a cluster of Śara reeds. It was highly blazing all round. It split into six due to the Śara reeds.

81-84. Urged by Brahmā, the six Kṛttikās came there. They unified the foetus of Śaṁbhu that had been split into six among the reeds. They made it one person with a single body but six faces. The Kṛttikās who had been commanded by Brahmā, did so perfectly well.

That body in the form of a man with six faces remained among the reeds unprotected for a long time.

Once Pārvatī and Parameśvara who were desirous of going to Śrīśaila riding on the Bull came to that spot.[1]

85-91. At that time milk began to ooze out suddenly from the breasts of Goddess Pārvatī. She became surprised and spoke to Rudra, "Why did the milk issue forth from the breasts? Tell me the cause thereof, O soul of the universe."

On being asked thus Hara said: "Listen, O gentle lady, I shall tell you. Your son is present below. I had not discharged my semen virile into you. Before that Agni came there. On seeing him you became ashamed and went away to another place. In great fury the immensely powerful semen virile was discharged by me into the mouth of Agni. With the favour of Devas Fire-god cast it into Gaṅgā. She herself became burned and so Gaṅgā discharged it among the reeds. There it split into six and was unified and stabilized by the Mothers. It took the shape of a man. It was on seeing him that your breasts oozed out milk. He should be protected. He has great vigour. In exploits he is on a par with Viṣṇu. This alone appears to be your bosom-born son certainly. Hence take him quickly. You will become famous through him."

92. On being commanded thus by Śaṁbhu, she held that child immediately on her lap. The goddess then fed the child at her breasts.

93-94. Enchanted by the Lord, the goddess had tender emotion for the son. Then the son of Śaṅkara went to Kailāsa along with the Lord. The goddess attained great pleasure and satisfaction in

1. This explains the reunion of mother (Pārvatī) and the child Ṣaḍānana.

fondling her son. Thus the mysterious and miraculous birth of Kumāra has been described to you.

95-99. He who always listens to this birth of Kumāra, of great auspiciousness, undoubtedly obtains increase in the number of sons and grandsons. At his birth even Hara had to experience great sorrow. One who has listened to the holy rites of Vaiśākha lovingly,[1] shall become matchless. So Vaiśākha rites are destructive of all the masses of sins. It is meritorious. It yields life-long conjugal felicity. It brings about all riches. By its power even the unembodied god of Love (Kāma) became *Sāṅga* (endowed with all limbs). If one spends the Vaiśākha month without holy bath or charitable gifts, there shall be a series of miseries even if he performed all other holy rites. If only this one is performed, all Dharmas shall be conducive to welfare.

CHAPTER TEN

Glorification of the Gift of Umbrellas: The Story of Hemakānta

Maithila said :

1-2. O Brāhmaṇa, describe in detail the procedure of *Aśūnyaśayanavrata* that was advised by Devas and performed by the wife of Kāma. What is the charitable gift thereof? What is the procedure? How is the worship to be performed? What is the benefit thereof? Describe this, O Brāhmaṇa. I am very eager to hear.

Śrutadeva said:

3. Listen once again. I shall recount the Vrata that is named *Aśūnyaśayana* that is destructive of all sins and that was recounted by Hari to Ramā.[2]

4. If that Vrata is performed, the Lord of Devas having the lustre of cloud, the Lord of the universe, the destroyer of all

1. Vaiśākha-Vratas have a tenuous relation with the birth of Ṣaḍānana

2. VV 3-30 describe the details of the *Aśūnya-Śayana-Vrata* whereby a man or a woman is never separated from his/her spouse. Some of the details are a bit different from those described in MtP.

masses of sins, the husband of Lakṣmī, becomes pleased.

5. If a person does not perform this Vrata, O king, that is destructive of sins and continues to lead the life of a householder, that shall be fruitless unto him.

6-11. On the second day in the bright half of the month of Śrāvaṇa, O king, this excellent Vrata named *Aśūnyaśayana* should be taken up.

When the four months (of the rainy season) have arrived, men should regularly eat only the *Haviṣya* (food). O lord, the *Pāraṇā* should be completed in the course of the four months. Janārdana, the Lord of the universe, should be worshipped along with Lakṣmī. When the day of Pāraṇā arrives, four types of foodstuffs should be given as present to a Brāhmaṇa having a large family.

The Lord's idol should be beautiful and made of gold or silver. The Lord shall be clad in yellow garments and adorned with sylvan garlands. The idol should be exquisitely made. The devotee should worship Puruṣottama with sweet-smelling white flowers. The worship should be accompanied by gifts of beds, garments, feeding of Brāhmaṇas, feeding of couples and monetary gifts.

12. After worshipping Janārdana during the four months thus, the devotee should worship Hari as before, in the months beginning with Mārgaśīrṣa.

13. He should meditate on Hari, red in complexion, and accompanied by Rukmiṇī. Thus he should worship the Lord during four months beginning with Caitra.

14-15. Then he should devoutly worship the Lord stationed along with Bhūmi (Earth), the Lord devoid of sins and eulogized by Sanandana and other sages. He should conclude the worship on the second day in the month of Āṣāḍha. He should perform the Homa in the auspicious fire with the eight-syllabled Mantra (*oṁ namo nārāyaṇāya*).

16. In the Pāraṇā of the months beginning with Mārgaśīrsa, O king, the devotee should perform Homa with Viṣṇu-Gāyatrī.[1] Note the procedure for the months beginning with Caitra.

17-19. He should perform Homa in the auspicious fire, with Pauruṣa (Sūkta) Mantra (RV X.90). (The *Naivedyas*) should be

1 Viṣnu-Gāyatrī Mantra: *oṁ nārāyanāya vidmahe, vāsudevāya dhīmahi/ tanno viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt//*

Pañcāmṛta, milk pudding and sweet pie cooked in ghee. The materials are to be given in this order. Note (the procedure) for the (gift of) idols. He should (in the beginning) give a golden idol of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. He should give a golden image of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Ātman, in the middle. He should give a silver idol of the noble-souled Varāha in the end.

20-21. He should then feed Brāhmaṇas with the names beginning with Keśava. After honouring them with pairs of clothes and ornaments in accordance with his financial position, he should adore them and offer sweet pies cooked in ghee as presents. He should offer these to twelve Brāhmaṇas.

22-25a. Then he should give the image fashioned in advance to the preceptor. The bed as planned before should be complete and embellished with all ornaments. The great deity Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa should be duly worshipped on it. That should be given to an excellent Brāhmaṇa, a Vaiṣṇava with a large family, along with a bell-metal vessel and many sweet pies. The present should be made along with garments and ornaments as well as monetary gifts. He should duly worship other Brāhmaṇas too and feed them.

The Mantra for the gift: [1]

25b-26. "Just as your bed, O Janārdana, is not devoid of Lakṣmī, so also, O Keśava, let my bed too be not vacant by the merit of this charitable gift."

After requesting the Lord of Devas thus, he should take his food himself.

27-30. This *Vrata* can be performed by a man, a chaste woman or a widow. This excellent *Vrata* should be performed for the sake of *Aśūnyaśayana* ('non-vacant bed' i.e. life-long partnership of the spouse).

Thus, O excellent king, the *Vrata* has been recounted to you in detail. When Jagannātha is delighted, there shall be different kinds of progeny; when the Lord of Devas is pleased, those inaccessible to even Devas (can be acquired). Hence, by all means, one should perform this *Vrata*. It should be necessarily performed by one who

1. Cf. the *Dāna-mantra* occurring in MtP:
lakṣmyā na śūnyaṁ varada yathā te śayanaṁ sadā /
śayyā mamāpyaśūnyāstu tathaiva madhusūdana //

is desirous of going to the great region of Viṣṇu. Thus everything has been described by me. What else do you wish to hear?

31-33. On being told thus by him the saintly king requested the sage once again: "Describe in detail the greatness of the gift of umbrellas in the month of Vaiśākha. I am not satiated by listening to the holy rites mentioned for the month of Vaiśākha. They are conducive to auspiciousness."

On hearing these words of his that bring about fame and increase merit, Śrutadeva of great fame replied to (the king) of great fortune.

Śrutadeva said:[1]

34-35. Infinite is the merit of those persons who offer protection from sunshine to noble-souled men heated by the sun.

In this context they cite this traditional legend of yore pertaining to the holy rites of Vaiśākha.This is the incident that happened formerly in Kṛtayuga.

36. Formerly there was an intelligent king in Vangadeśa, well-known as Hemakānta. He was the son of Kuśaketu. He was the most excellent one among those who bore weapons. Once, as he was much interested in hunting, he entered a deep forest.

37. There he killed different kinds of animals such as boars etc. At the time of midday he became completely exhausted. He went to hermitages of sages.

38. At that time the sages of good holy rites named Śatarcins were engaged in meditation. They were not at all aware of anything that was going on outside.

39. On seeing those Brāhmaṇas motionless, the king became furious and was inclined to kill them. At that time ten thousand disciples restrained the king.

40. "O evil-minded one, listen to our words. Our preceptors are engaged in meditation. They do not know anything that happens outside. Hence it does not behove you to be angry."

41. Thereupon. excited with fury he spoke these words to the disciples: "O Brāhmaṇas, I am exhausted in my journey. Treat me with hospitality."

1. VV 34-83 describe the story of prince Hemakānta to explain the efficacy of the donation of umbrellas in Vaiśākha.

42-43. On being told thus by the king, the disciples said to the king: "We have not been directed by our preceptors, O king. Further, we eat what we get by way of alms. We are dependent on our preceptors. How are we competent to entertain you?" (Thus) refused by the disciples, the king took up his bow in order to kill them.

44-48. 'These have been saved by me in various ways from dangers due to animals, robbers etc. Now they who were given monetary gifts by me, try to teach me. These are ungrateful and excessively proud. They are (like) murderous assailants. Even if I kill them, there is no harm.'

Infuriated thus, he began to discharge arrows from his bow. When they fled, he chased them. Thus he killed three hundred disciples.

In their fright, they left the hermitage and fled away quickly. When the disciples were driven away, the evil-minded soldiers seized the various articles stocked in the hermitage forcibly and ate them up. In this they were encouraged by the king himself.

49-50. Thereafter the king returned to the city by the end of the day accompanied by his army.

On hearing about the action of his son, Kuśaketu reproached his son very strongly. As he was devoid of patience and unsuitable to the kingdom, the king banished him from the city as well as from his land itself, O king.

51-55. Banished by his father, king Hemakānta became excessively bewildered. He entered the thick forest and was very much afflicted by *Hatyās* ('Sins of Slaughter').

He stayed for a long time in the deep forest devoid of men. He followed the practice of hunters and maintained himself. He could not permanently stay anywhere because he was (hotly) pursued by the *Hatyās* continuously. Thus the vicious one passed twenty-eight years.

(Once) A great sage named Trita came to that forest in the course of his pilgrimage. It was the month of Vaiśākha and the time was midday with the sun blazing furiously.

As he went along, he was oppressed by the sun's heat and was extremely afflicted with thirst. He fell into a swoon in a place where there was no tree at all.

56. As good luck would have it, King Hemakānta saw the great sage named Trita. Being overwhelmed with fatigue, he had

swooned. He was much distressed due to thirst. The base king took pity on him.

57. He made an umbrella with leaves of Palāśa tree (Butea frondosa) and warded off the sunshine by holding it above the head of the sage. He gave him some water kept in a gourd.

58-63. By this service the sage regained his consciouness. He held the umbrella made of leaves which was handed over to him by that Kṣatriya. Thereby he recovered from fatigue. He went to a certain village and got back the regular functioning of the sense-organs.

On account of the power of that meritorious deed the three hundred Brahmahatyās perished instantaneously. He became a noble-souled one.

Thereupon Hemakānta, the mighty warrior, became surprised. 'I have been afflicted in various ways. Where have those Brahmahatyās gone? How have they gone? Have they been dispelled by anyone? What is the cause thereof?'

He was thinking in this manner about his relief from Brahmahatyās. Even as the king stood thus ignorant of the cause thereof, the messengers of Yama came there in order to take away this high-souled Hemakānta who was staying in the forest. They made him sick with dysentery in order to take away the life of this noble-souled one.

64-72. Agitated due to the deathpangs, he saw three beings who were terrible with hair on their heads standing up erect. They were the messengers of Yama instilling fear in him.

Thinking about his (evil) deeds, the king remained silent then. As a result of the charitable gift of an umbrella. O king, he was reminded of Viṣṇu.

Recollected by him, Mahāviṣṇu said to his minister Viṣvaksena: "You go quickly and restrain the messengers of Yama. Protect Hemakānta who was engaged in the holy rite pertaining to Vaiśākha. Go to his city and hand over this devotee of mine free from sins to his father. Enlighten Kuśaketu through these words uttered by me: 'Whether one is devoid of all Dharmas, or bereft of celibacy etc., if he is engaged in Vaiśākha Dharmas, he shall undoubtedly be my favourite. Though your son has committed grave offences, he was engaged in saving the sage. Since he has made a gift of an umbrella in the month of Vaiśākha, he is rid of his sins. There is no doubt about it. By the power of that meritorious deed he has

become *Śānta* (quiescent), *Dānta* (self-controlled) and *Cirāyuṣa* (long-lived). He is endowed with the qualities of heroism, liberal-mindedness etc. and is on a par with you in good qualities. Hence establish this powerful prince in the administration of the kingdom.' Command, that excellent king that he has been directed thus by Viṣṇu. Leave Hemakānta with his father and come back to me."

73-74. On being ordered thus by the Lord, Viṣvaksena, the mighty one, came near Hemakānta and restrained the messengers of Yama. With his propitious hand he touched the limbs of the king. By the power of the contact with the devotee of the Lord, he became rid of all ailments in an instant.

75-78a. Viṣvaksena went to his city along with him. On seeing him, Kuśaketu, the great lord, became surprised. He bowed down his head devoutly and prostrated flat on the ground. He took the attendant of the Supreme Being into his abode. He eulogized him with different kinds of prayers. He adored him with his great affluence. Delighted with him Viṣvaksena, the mighty one, told him everything that had been previously spoken to him by Viṣṇu in regard to Hemakānta.

78b-81a. On hearing it, Kuśaketu installed his son in the kingdom. Permitted by Viṣvaksena, he entered the forest along with his wife.

After taking leave of Hemakānta with due deference Viṣvaksena went to Śvetadvīpa. The intelligent and noble-minded Viṣvaksena returned to the side of Viṣṇu.

King Hemakānta thereafter performed all the holy rites pertaining to Vaiśākha causing auspiciousness and pleasing to Viṣṇu. He performed those holy rites every year.

81b-83. He was a favourite patron of Brāhmaṇas, strictly adhered to the path of virtue. He was quiescent. He subjugated all the sense-organs and the mind. He was merciful to all living beings. He was initiated in all Yajñas. He flourished with all affluence. He was surrounded by sons, grandsons etc. After enjoying all worldly pleasures he attained the world of Viṣṇu.

84. I do not see any other holy rite on a par with those pertaining to Vaiśākha. Effort in this regard is pleasant. They are the cause of plentiful merit. They are like fire unto the fuel of sins. They are easily accessible. They are the giver of all aims of life beginning with Dharma and ending with Mokṣa.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Anecdote of King Kīrtimān

Maithila said:

1. The holy rites pertaining to Vaiśākha are easily accomplishable. They bring about abundance of merits. They directly cause delight to Viṣṇu and are the means of realizing the great aims of life.

2. Why are they not well-known in the world in spite of their being eternal and laid down in the Śrutis, though many Dharmas of Rājasa and Tāmasa nature are very well-known?

3-4. They (i.e. the latter) are very difficult to perform and they involve a lot of effort. They require great expenditure. Some people praise the month of Māgha. Others praise the four months (of rainy season). They extol in various ways the Dharmas of Vyatīpāta etc. I am desirous of hearing about the distinction of these cases. Explain it in detail to me.

Śrutadeva said:

5. Listen, O king, I shall recount why these are not popular. I shall explain how the other rites are well-known in the world.

6-8. There are many people in the world of *Rājasa* and *Tāmasa* types (nature). They are lustful. They wish for worldly pleasures, sons, grandsons, riches etc. Somewhere and somehow you may find with great difficulty some people who may endeavour for heaven. Hence they perform good holy rites such as Yajña etc. with great effort. No man seeks and strives for salvation (*Mokṣa*). People with petty hopes and desires go in for desired benefits and engage themselves in great many holy rites.

9. Therefore, the Dharmas of *Rājasa* and *Tāmasa* types have become popular and well-known and not these Dharmas of *Sāttvika* nature, (though) they are pleasing to Hari.

10. These Dharmas of *Niṣkāma* (desireless) type are (certainly) the bestowers of worldly pleasures and heavenly benefits too. But the foolish people deluded by the Māyā of the Lord do not know that.

11-12. When one attains lordship, one's desires are entirely realized. If one succumbs to temptations, one is deprived of the lordship.

I shall tell the reason for keeping this a secret in the world scrupulously, in regard to the Dharmas pertaining to Vaiśākha. They are of the *Sāttvika* type and are intended for men of *Sāttvika* type here.

13-15. Formerly there was an emperor in Kāśī well-known as Kīrtimān. He was an ornament unto the family of Ikṣvāku. He was an illustrious son of Nṛga.[1] He had conquered anger as well as the sense-organs. He was a patron of Brāhmaṇas. He was the most excellent one among all kings.

Once he was engaged in hunting and he came to the hermitage of Vasiṣṭha. The month was Vaiśākha, fierce on account of the oppressive heat (of the sun). While proceeding ahead, he saw on the way the disciples of that noble-souled sage constantly engaged in various activities.

16-20. In some places they were setting up *Prapās* (free-water stalls) and shady pavilions. Some were engaged in repairing tanks by stopping the breaches in the embankments. In other places, they were engaged in fanning some persons comfortably seated at the foot of trees. Some were seen offering sugarcane stumps in some places, sweet scents in some other places, and fruits in still other places. At midday they made the gifts of umbrellas and of Pānaka (sweet drinks) in the evening. In some places they offered betel-leaves and in some camphor ointments for the eyes. Some were seen spreading smooth sands in shady places in the forest and in the well-swept courtyards. O king, some were seen tying up swings suspended from branches of trees. (When) he asked them, "Who are you?", they replied, "We are Vāsiṣṭhas (i.e. disciples of Vasiṣṭha)."

21-23. "What is this?" ("What are you doing?"), He asked. They told the excellent king, "These are the holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha. They are the means of attaining the aims of life. These rites are being performed by us scrupulously at the bidding of Vasiṣṭha."

The king then asked, "What is the benefit that men attain by performing these? Who is pleased (thereby)? Say this in detail in the manner you have heard."

1. Nṛga was the younger brother of Ikṣvāku. He was famous for performance of sacrifices and charity (Mbh, *Vana* 88.5-6; *Anuśāsana* 76.23). He was cursed to be a chameleon and was redeemed by Kṛṣṇa (Mbh, *Anuśāsana* 70. 2-28). But no son called Kīrtimān is attributed to him in Mbh and BhP.

On being asked thus by the king, they replied to him:

24-27. "We are carrying out the orders of our preceptor. We perform the various holy rites on the path. Hence we have no time (to spare). You would better ask our preceptor in a befitting manner. That sage of great renown understands these Dharmas thoroughly and correctly." On being replied thus by the disciples of Vasiṣṭha, the king quickly proceeded to the meritorious hermitage of Vasiṣṭha well-known for imparting knowledge of various sciences and Yoga.

On seeing the king coming, Vasiṣṭha became pleased in his mind. He duly entertained the noble-souled king along with his retinue. After receiving the hospitality and having seated himself comfortably, the delighted king asked that preceptor:

The king said:

28-33a. On the way a great, wonderfully auspicious thing was observed by me. It was the splendid work performed by your disciples. I asked them about the auspicious rites which were being performed by them. Nothing was explained by them. They said, "We do not have sufficient leisure to explain these holy rites (adequately). We have to carry out the work as directed by our preceptor. You would better ask our preceptor."

When this was said by them, I have approached you. Since I am engaged in hunting, I have become tired. Desirous of some hospitality (I halted here). There this meritorious work performed by your disciples was seen by me on the way. O eminent sage, I have a great desire to know more of these holy rites. You are the first (sage) and inasmuch as you perform all the holy rites from the beginning, O eminent sage, explain them in detail to me. I am desirous of hearing about them. I am your humble disciple and I have faith (in these rites).

33b-36a. On being asked thus by the king belonging to the dynasty of Ikṣvāku, the sage of great reputation was very much pleased in his mind to note that he had been properly asked by him then. (He said) "O king, your intellect is well employed and well trained. Since your mind is enthusiastically interested in the talk about Viṣṇu and the performance of holy rites pertaining to him, your merit has come to fruition." After remarking thus with great delight, he spoke to the king thus:

36b-41a. "Listen, O king, I shall speak what I have been asked by you now. By listening to that, one is liberated from all sins. Granting that a person abandons all (other) holy rites and is completely engrossed in sensual pleasures, if he is engaged in the holy bath during the month of Vaiśākha, he becomes a favourite of Viṣṇu. Even if a person performs all other holy rites along with their ancillaries but Vaiśākha is not duly honoured by means of holy bath, charitable gifts, worships and other meritorious deeds, Hari is far way from him.

If Vaiśākha is passed without taking the holy bath and making charitable gifts, he becomes a Cāṇḍāla through this omission. There is no doubt about this.

If Hari is propitiated by means of the great holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha, he becomes satisfied and grants whatever is desired.

41b-45. The Lord of the universe, the Consort of Lakṣmī is the destroyer of the entire mass of sins. He is pleased with the subtlest of holy rites and not with gross (physical) efforts or expenses in terms of money. If he is devoutly worshipped, Viṣṇu grants whatever is desired.

Hence, O king, devotion to Viṣṇu should always be practised. Even if he is adored with water, Hari, the Lord of the universe, dispels all pain and strain. He becomes satisfied like a thirsty man with water.

Even a great Karma may yield only a small benefit. Even a small Karma may yield a great benefit. The greatness or smallness of the Karma is not the cause of the greatness or smallness of the benefit (accrued). But the nature of the Karma (is the cause). The way of Karma is inscrutable.[1]

46. These holy rites prescribed for the month of Vaiśākha can be performed with very little effort. They are auspicious and pleasing to Viṣṇu. They prevent increase in expenses.

47. Hence, O king, you too perform the holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha. Make all the people in your kingdom perform these auspicious rites.

48. The base one who does not perform the holy rites laid down for Vaiśākha should be rebuked in various ways, O king. (If

1. The discussion in vv 41b-45 indicates that though Vratas in Vaiśākha appear easy, they are great in their efficacy.

he does not perform even then) he should be punished by you."

49. Thus (the sage) clearly explained to him the necessity of performing those holy rites by expounding the scriptural texts. Afterwards he described to him the nature, procedure etc. of the Vaiśākha holy rites completely.

50. After hearing everything about all the rites, he devoutly revered the preceptor. The king thereafter returned to his abode and performed all the rites.

51. O king, he was a great devotee of Keśava, the unsullied Lord of Devas. The king did not see (i.e. worship) anyone other than Viṣṇu (Padmanābha), the Lord of Devas.

52-55. A great Bherī-drum was placed on an elephant and this was proclaimed throughout his kingdom through soldiers:[1] "If anyone over the age of eight years and under eighty does not take early morning bath when the Sun is in Aries, all those people will be liable to be punished by me. They may be executed or banished from the kingdom surely. Even if it is (my) father or son or wife or an intimate friend, if he shuns (the performance of the holy rites in Vaiśākha), he should be bound over by me like a robber. After taking the holy bath in the splendid water, gifts should be made over to eminent Brāhmaṇas. O sinless ones, perform other holy rites too, such as establishing *Prapās* etc. in accordance with your capacity."

56. He appointed a Brāhmaṇa expounder of holy rites in every village. He appointed a special officer for every five villages.

57-60. That officer was entrusted with the duty of punishing those who had forsaken their Dharmas. He had at his disposal ten horses (i.e. ten soldiers from the cavalry).

The tree of Dharma and pious activity thus planted everywhere at the bidding of the emperor flourished in every land profusely. All those men who died in the realm of that king, went to Hari's abode, O excellent king.

O excellent king, even those who go to Hari's abode (temple) accidentally, go to Hari's abode (Vaikuṇṭha) after death. Certainly the world of Viṣṇu is attained by men quickly. One who takes a bath but once in the morning under some pretext when the Sun is in Aries, shall be rid of all sins and go to the great region of Viṣṇu.

1. VV 52-58 show the king's efforts to popularize (even by compulsion) the Vaiśākha Vratas.

61-64. By taking the holy bath in Vaiśākha even once one does not go to the world of Yama. O king, at that time the son of the Sun-god (i.e. Yama) had nothing to record. Then Citragupta got complete rest from his writing and accounting (of Karmas etc.). The previous records about the sins of people were erased quickly in a moment by the people who went to the world of Viṣṇu for their own (good) Karmas.

All the Narakas (Hells) became empty as they were devoid of sinful creatures. By the power of Vaiśākha the path (to hell) became devoid of all traffic. All people became free from impurities and of brilliant form and went to the region of Hari.

65-68. All the abodes of the heaven-dwellers became empty similarly. When the heaven became empty, when all the Narakas too became void, Nārada went to Dharmarāja and spoke thus: "O king, no usual lamentation is heard in Naraka; nothing is being written about the evil-doers. Citragupta is observing a vow of silence like a sage. Tell me the reason, O king, why men of evil actions, great imposters and tricksters do not come to your abode."

69. When these words were spoken by the noble-souled Nārada, the king, the son of Vivasvān (i.e. Yama) said thus somewhat helplessly:

70. "O Nārada, the king who is ruling the earth now, is a great devotee of Hṛṣīkeśa, the ancient excellent Puruṣa.

71-73. He enlightens the people in the holy rites of Vaiśākha by means of Bherī sound: 'He who is over eight years and under eighty and who does not perform holy rites of Vaiśākha will be undoubtedly punished by me.' Because they are so afraid, therefore all the people never transgress. By means of that Karma, O Nārada, they go to the abode of Viṣṇu. People will go to the abode of Hari by resorting to holy rites of Vaiśākha.

74-78. The path to my place has been destroyed by that king now, O excellent sage. All the Narakas have been evacuated. So also the worlds of heaven-dwellers. The accountant Citragupta has taken rest. What has been already written has been now erased by people. The greatness of the holy rites of the month of Vaiśākha is of such (efficacy), O sage. O Brāhmaṇa, people have been rid of the sins like that of slaughter of Brāhmaṇas. By performing their duties in the month of Vaiśākha, they go to the great region of Viṣṇu. I have now become a mere log of wood (unable to punish or bless people). I shall fight with him and kill him (though) he is

very mighty in every respect. The (servant) who does not carry out the tasks of his master, who remains inactive but who yet receives his wages, certainly goes to Naraka.

79. If he is indestructible by a Deva, I will go to Brahmā, intimate to him everything and afterwards will be free from worry."

80-86. After saying this he took leave of the Brāhmaṇa. Kāla lifted up his terrible staff, rode on his buffalo and went to the earth along with his followers.[1] He was surrounded by his excessively fierce attendants like Mṛtyu, Roga, Jarā etc. and the messengers numbering fifty crores. He immediately besieged the entire capital of that saintly king. He then blew his exceedingly fierce conch that instilled fear in all the worlds.

On hearing it, that saintly king knew that it was Yama, the son of Vivasvān. He got ready with all preparations and angrily set out from the city.

The fight between those two was terrifying and caused hair stand on end. Within a trice that saintly king subdued Mṛtyu, Kāla, Roga, Yama and Dūtapati. He routed them in great anger. Thereupon the infuriated king Yama himself approached him and fought with him with many arrows. He roared like a lion. With three arrows the king cut off his bow.

87-91. Taking up his sword and shield, Yama came down to kill him. On seeing him, the king became furious. He cut off the sword and the shield and planted in his forehead an arrow that had the lustre of a black serpent. On being struck by it Yama became furious and took up his staff. He charged it with the Mantra of a Brahmā missile and discharged it towards him (the king). The onlookers shrieked "Alas!" At that time, for the sake of the protection of his own devotee, Viṣṇu hurled his Discus. The Discus hurled by Viṣṇu came to the battleground, quickly clashed with the staff of Yama and checked that Brāhma missile. The devotee of the Lord (i.e. the king) became frightened and immediately eulogized the Discus.

92-94. "O Thousand-spoked (Discus), the ornament of the hands of Viṣṇu, obeisance to you. Formerly you were held by Hari for

1. Conquest of the god of Death (Yama) and his torturous realms (Narakas) is looked upon as the highest efficacy of a Vrata. It is attributed to Ekādaśī in NP and to Vaiśākha-Vratas here. It is a device of popularizing a Vrata, used here in vv 52 to the end of the Chapter and Chapters 12 and 13 later.

the sake of protecting all the worlds. I beg of you today to protect Yama, the highly powerful devotee of Viṣṇu. You alone are the deity of death unto men who are inimical to Devas. No one else. Hence, O lord of the universe, be merciful. Protect this Yama."

95. The Discus that was eulogized by the king thus left Yama and came near the king, O great king, even as the Devas stood watching in the firmament.

96-100. Then Yama who was exceedingly dejected went to the abode of God Brahmā.[1] There he saw the Grandfather of all the worlds seated, surrounded by embodied and unembodied beings. He is the support of Dhruva, the seed (creator) of the universe. He was attended upon by all the Devas, the Guardians of the Worlds and Lords of the Quarters, Itihāsas, Purāṇas and other (sacred texts) assuming the bodies of Devas, oceans, rivers and lakes in embodied forms, all the trees such as Aśvattha etc. having physical bodies, tanks, wells and lakes as well as mountains with physical forms, the units of time such as days, nights, fortnights, months, years, Kalās, Kāṣṭhās, Nimeṣas, seasons, Ayanas (transits of the Sun) and Yugas.

101-103. He was surrounded by *Saṁkalpas* (resolve), *Vikalpas* (doubts), winkings and openings of the eyes, stars, Yogas, Karaṇas (astrological positions), full moons, declinings and wanings of the moon, happiness, misery, fears, profits, losses, victories, defeats, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, *Śānta* (calm), *Mūḍha* (deluded), *Atiprauḍha* (mature), the effects of Prakṛti, Vāyu (Wind-god), the lord of Devas, phlegm, bile and others.

104-110a. In the middle of all these, Yama entered like a bashful bride. He was glancing at the floor and he exhibited a pale face. On seeing Yama entering and standing nearby along with his followers, all those beings became surprised. They said to one another:

"Why has Yama come here? Why has he come here to see Lord Brahmā, the creator of the worlds? This son of Ravi never remains inactive even for a moment. Why has he come? Are the Heaven-dwellers hale and happy? This is the greatest wonder that his scroll is without any writing. The writer also has come with him.

1. VV 96-103 describe the assembly of God Brahmā. It is supposed to be attended by even impersonal principles in their embodied forms.

He is also exceedingly dejected. His scroll is never kept without any writing (clean) because he is afraid of Dharma. What has never been seen or heard is present now."

Even as those beings were commenting thus, Yama, the chastiser of living beings, the son of Sun-god, fell on the ground in front of Brahmā like a tree uprooted. He cried, "Save me, save me!"

110b-112. "O Lord of Devas, I have been humiliated. My scroll has been rendered clean (without writing). O Lotus-seated One, when you are the Lord, I have never seen hitherto any defeat or failure."

After saying this, O excellent king, he became motionless. Thereupon a tumultuous sound arose in the assembly.

113-117. "Yama, the son of Vivasvān, who makes all mortals, mobile and immobile beings sad, is himself miserable now and he cries. Why does he cry? He who distresses people shall ere long meet with mishaps and calamities. A man who commits evil deeds does not gain auspiciousness." Then Wind-god prevented them from talking. Brahmā took note of the opinion of all those beings present there. Warding off the other people, Wind-god lifted up Yama slowly with his brawny arms as stout as Sāla trees. The liberal-minded Wind-god made him occupy his seat as he was utterly agitated and thoroughly helpless. Then Wind-god asked Yama as he sat on his seat:

118-120. "By whom have you been attacked? By whom have you been prevented from your office. O lord, by whom was this scroll wiped off? Tell me everything. What for have you come? O dear one, he who is the Lord of all is your maker and my maker too. Whence is this misery in your heart?" On being asked thus by Wind-god, Yama told him the truth and said these words. On seeing the face of the son of Kuśaketu his words were choked. He was greatly agitated.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Yama's Lamentation

Yama said:

1-2 Listen to my words, O Grandfather (Brahmā). I have been ignored and deprived (of my job), I take the transgression of my office as worse than death. If an employee does not do his duty, O Lotus-seated One, and if he appropriates the money of his master, he shall become a worm in a log of wood.

3. An intelligent man who, out of greed, misappropriates the wealth (of the master), is reborn, O Lord of the earth, as a lower animal and falls into hell (where he remains) for a period of three hundred Kalpas.

4. If (the employee) is disinterested in his work and does not carry it out properly, O Lotus-born One, he suffers (the tortures of) terrible hells. The man is reborn then as a crow.

5. He who is devoted to his own selfish ends and spoils the work of his master, is a sinning soul. He is reborn as a domestic mouse and continues thus for three hundred Kalpas.

6. The employee who is capable of doing his work but (does not do it) and stays behind in his house is reborn as a cat.

7. O Lord, I keep the subjects under discipline on the basis of justice at your bidding—the meritorious through merit and the sinful through sinful act.

8. The sages equipped with (the knowledge of) Dharma Śāstras (Ethical Texts) discussed and thought in detail at the beginning of the Kalpa. They decided the tortures to be meted out by me (by way of punishment).

9. I belong to you. Still I am not able to carry out your behest. Your decree on the earth has been broken by King Kīrtimān.

10. I am afraid of him, O Lord of the universe. He is staying somewhere ruling the oceangirt earth with the help of holy rites of Vaiśākha.

11-13. People have abandoned all holy rites; they do not worship the ancestors; they have discarded holy service to the sacred fire; they do not perform such holy rites as pilgrimage to the Tīrthas; they have abandoned both the paths, i.e., that of Karma and that of knowledge; they have ceased to practice control of the

vital breath; they refrain from performing Homas and study of Vedas and they commit many sins. Still, they go to the world of Viṣṇu by performing the holy rites of Vaiśākha. Those men go there along with their fathers and grandfathers.

14-19. Not only that. All the dead forefathers, parents of the forefathers, their maternal grandfathers and their fathers and others go (to Viṣṇuloka).

They take along with them many others too including the ancestors of their mothers. There is a further headache, a further misery, O Lord.

The fathers of their beloved ones too go (to Viṣṇu's world) after wiping off my record (of their Karma). A son born of the seed of the forefathers held in her womb by a maid servant, O lord (also goes to Viṣṇu's world).

One does an act and the same one enjoys its fruit. But this rule is broken. One who knows everything, a person who has become omniscient in a family, redeems more than twenty-six generations of both the sides (that of the father and that of the mother). This is more than enough, O Lord. O dear one, all those born of their beloved ones, go to the highest region of Viṣṇu. I have nothing to do with this type of job and service.

20. One who is engaged in the holy rites of Vaiśākha leaves me behind and goes to Hari. He becomes highly refulgent after ridding himself of all sins. He uplifts and redeems twenty-one generations of his family.

21. He leaves off my path and goes to Hari's abode. O Lord, no man obtains that goal by means of performing Yajñas.

22. One who is equipped with (the merits of) all the Tīrthas, charitable gifts etc., austerities, holy *Vratas* and entire range of pious and devout activities does not obtain that goal.

23. By dying in Prayāga, or in the middle of fighting in a battlefield or by falling off the precipice (*Bhṛgupatana*) or at Kāśī, people do not attain that goal which is attained by one strictly adhering to the holy rites of Vaiśākha.

24. By taking the early morning bath, by worshipping the Lord, by listening to the narrative called "The Greatness of the Month", and by performing the requisite holy rites pertaining to Viṣṇu, one shall become the sole lord of the world of Viṣṇu.

25. I consider the world of Viṣṇu, the Lord of the universe, limitless, O Lotus-seated One, because it is not yet filled up com-

pletely though flooded with crores and crores of people.

26-27. (*Defective Text partially*) By the entire abode of Mādhava the Grandfather (is ignored). Those who perform forbidden rites, those who perform only what is laid down (in the Vedas), the pure ones, the impure ones—all these perform the duties pertaining to Vaiśākha and they go to the world (of Viṣṇu) at the behest of the king who is our great enemy and more so of yours in particular.

28-31a. This king is to be curbed by you, O Lord of the worlds. Abandoning all other holy rites but by taking the Vaiśākha holy bath only once cultured people go to the abode of Hari, to Vaikuṇṭha. If this king whose sole resort is the feet of Viṣṇu is neglected by us, he will take the entire world (to Vaikuṇṭha). There is no doubt about it. This staff and record of Karmas is placed at your feet. The matchless guardianship of the worlds has been acquired by that king.

31b-35a. Of what avail is a child that is born causing pain to the mother, if it does not cause the downfall of the enemy (terribly hot) like the Sun in the month of Jyeṣṭha? If a young woman gives birth to a worthless child, or has a wicked son, her fame does not spread like the lightning of the cloud.

If a child does not redeem the forefathers from sin through his learning or strength, he, delivered on the earth, is only a disease affecting the belly of his mother.

If a son behaves perversely in regard to the pursuit of virtue, wealth and love, that son is called a slayer of his mother by good men. He is the meanest of all men.

35b-38. The mother of this king and the wife of this king have become well-known in the world through their holy rites. There is only one woman in the world who has given birth to a real hero. There is no doubt about it (his being the hero) as this (king) Kīrtimān is born for wiping off my records.

O Lord, this has never (before) been attempted by any Kṣatriya. Wiping off of the records is never heard of in the Purāṇas, O Lord of the worlds.

Excepting that king who is devoted to Hari, I do not know anyone else, O Lord of the chiefs of the worlds, who encourages others through proclamations by beating *Paṭaha* drums and obstructs the path to my place.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Yama is Consoled

Brahmā said:

1-2. What is the miracle seen by you? Why do you feel excessively sad? Distress caused to saintly people will cause trouble to one till one's death.

Merely by uttering (the name of Hari) the greatest region is attained. Won't the people then go to the world of Hari at the bidding of the king?[1]

3. One obeisance offered to Govinda is on a par with the valedictory bath after a hundred horse-sacrifices. A person who performs a sacrifice undergoes rebirth, but obeisance offered to Hari prevents further birth.

4. Of what avail is Kurukṣetra and of what use is Sarasvatī to him, if the two syllables *HA* and *RI* are present at the tip of his tongue?

5. A Brāhmṇa might have had sexual intercourse with a Cāṇḍāla woman, particularly when she is having her monthly course. Even then, if he remembers Viṣṇu at the time of death, he will attain his (Viṣṇu's) region.

6. Since, remembering him is liked by Viṣṇu, one attains Sāyujya with Viṣṇu in spite of a mass of sins produced as a result of eating forbidden food.

7. Such is the month named Vaiśākha as Viṣṇu is fond of it, O Yama. Even by listening to the holy rites thereof one is liberated from all sins.

8. Then, does it need to be particularly mentioned that one who is devoted to the performance of holy rites goes (to the world of Viṣṇu)? When one sings about (the greatness of Vaiśākha rites), Puruṣottama becomes pleased.

9. How then does a person who is devoted to the performance of holy rites not attain salvation? The Lord of the worlds, Puruṣottama, is our progenitor.

10. This (king) performs these holy rites in the month of Vaiśākha

1. In consoling Yama in vv 2-15, God Brahmā extols the glory of Viṣṇu, his name *Ha-Ri* (v 4) and the efficacy of Vaiśākha-Vratas—the main objective of the Purāṇa-writer.

which he (the Lord) likes. (Hence) Viṣṇu is delighted with him. He always stands by him and assists him.

11. O Yama, you are not competent to punish him or teach him. Nothing inauspicious exists in the case of the devotees of Vāsudeva. They need not be afraid of births, deaths, old age and sickness.

12. An employee should eagerly engage himself in the tasks of his master to the maximum of his capacity. He should become contented with that much. He does not fall into Narakas.

13. When the task (entrusted to him) is beyond his capacity, the employee should inform his master. By that much the servant becomes free from indebtedness and attains happiness.

14. Once he has intimated (to the employer), he becomes free from indebtedness and sin. If endeavour is made in regard to his duty, the embodied one (i.e. employee) has no offence whatsoever.

15 Therefore it does not behove you to bewail when the task has become impossible.

16. On being told thus by Brahmā, Yama became further dejected. With his eyes bedimmed with flowing tears he spoke these words giving expression to his pitiable plight:

17-18a "O dear one, everything that I have acquired has been obtained by means of the worship of your feet. O Lotus-born Lord, I will not go to (my) duty once again as long as this excessively powerful king rules this earth.

18b-21a. O Lord, I shall get that king removed from his holy rites and then alone be contented like a son who has offered rice-balls (to his ancestors) at Gayā. O merciful one, enable me to attain this and fulfil my task without fail. Thereafter I shall be free from ailments once again and shall carry out your behest."

On hearing what was requested by Yama, Brahmā became worried once again. Consoling him in various ways, Brahmā spoke to him once again:

Brahmā said:

21b-24. The king who is devoted to Viṣṇu's holy rites cannot be restrained by you. If, out of anger, you wish to outwit him (wait), we shall (first) approach Hari and intimate everything to him. What he says thereafter, we shall carry out.

He alone is the maker of the world. He is the protector of

Dharma. He alone is our guide, chastiser, maker and controller.

O Dharma, after he has said anything, there is nothing to say further; there is no scope for any argument. It is not proper for us to dispute further. On the earth too, nowhere do we find anyone arguing after the king has decisively ordered anything.

25-29a. Having consoled Yama thus, Brahmā went to the Ocean of Milk along with him. He eulogized Puruṣottama who is the Supreme Lord devoid of Guṇas (attributes) and is (of the form of) knowledge alone, who (can be attained) only through Sāṁkhya and Yoga, who is single and without a second.

Then Viṣṇu manifested himself before them, on being eulogized by Brahmā.

Yama and Brahmā hurriedly made obeisance to him. In words and tone as majestic as the rumbling sound of a cloud, Mahāviṣṇu spoke to them : "What for have you both come here? Is there any misery caused by demons? Why is the face of Yama pale and faded? Why is he stooping down his head? Explain this, O Brahmā."

On being told thus, the Lotus-born Lord said:

29b-33. "When the king, the most excellent one among your servants, is engaged in administering the kingdom, men who are devoted to the holy rites of Vaiśākha attain the immutable great region. Hence Yama's city has become vacant. Therefore, Yama is exceedingly sad. He fought with the king. In order to kill him, he raised his staff. But he has been defeated by your Discus. He therefore, came to me.

We are not competent to mete out punishment to your noble-souled devotees. Hence we have sought refuge in you alone, O great Lord. Chastise that king and protect Yama who is your own (favourite)."

On being told thus (the Lord) laughingly said to Brahmā and Yama :

34-37a. "I will forsake Lakṣmī,[1] my vital airs and body, Śrivatsa, Kaustubha, my garland named Vaijayantī, Śvetadvīpa, Vaikuṇṭha, the Milk Ocean, Śeṣa and even Garuḍa, but I am not at all interested in forsaking my devotee. How can I feel interested in aban-

1. Popularization of devotion to Viṣṇu is the aim of this author. This firm promise of Viṣṇu is meant to contribute to it.

doning my devotees who leave off all worldly pleasures for my sake? They are ready to abandon even their lives for my sake; the blessed ones identify themselves with me. So I shall find out other means of suppressing your misery.

37b-40. That king has been given by me a life span of ten thousand years on the earth. Of them eight thousand years have passed by, O annihilator of men. If the remaining part of his life is spent, he will attain Sāyujya with me. Thereafter, a vicious person named Vena[1] will become king. He will destroy all these holy rites laid down in the Śrutis. At that time the Vaiśākha holy rites too will become extinct. On account of the sins committed by him alone, Vena will perish.

41-43. Afterwards I will incarnate as Pṛthu[2] and spread the holy rites once again. Then I will popularize the rites of Vaiśākha among people. Only one in a thousand will be my true devotee who will dedicate his own vital airs to me and will renounce the desire to hoard more and more possessions. These holy rites will be current only among such men. One (among many) will come to be conversant with these holy rites of mine on the earth. Thereafter your task will be fulfilled, O annihilator of men. Do not be sad.

44-47. I shall make all noble-souled men observing the Vaiśākha rites give you your share in this month of Vaiśākha. After some time I will make the king also (give you your share). Therefore, pacify your grief. One enjoys your share with heroism as the present, because you are an enemy superior in strength (?) One who continues to partake of his share does not feel miserable. Men should give *Arghya* unto you everyday at the time of their holy bath. On the last day of Vaiśākha they must, with you in view, offer a pot filled with water and cooked rice mixed with curds.[3] If they do not do so, all their observances of the holy rites of Vaiśākha shall be fruitless.

1. A notoriously vicious king of yore; born of Manu and Sunīthā; cursed to death by sages. The famous king Pṛthu, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, was churned out of Vena's right hand (Mbh. *Śānti*, Ch. 59; VP I.13; also PE 844-45.) It is narrated as a prophecy.

2. Son of Vena. The first emperor coronated by Devas. He established Law, Order and Dharma and made arrangement for the livelihood of people of all castes and communities as symbolized by his milking of the Earth-Cow (VaP 1. 126-74).

3. This has become an integral part of daily Vaiśākha observances (see vv. 55-58).

48-52. Hence eschew anger towards the king who is devoted to me. He will give you your share. Those men who give you your share and perform the great holy rites of Vaiśākha should not have any hindrance on account of you. If they manifestly worship only me and shun you, the protector of Dharmas, O blessed one, you will punish them at my bidding. I shall send Sunanda to make the king give you your share. At my behest, he will go and make him give your share."

Even as Yama stood waiting thus near him, the Garuḍa-vehicled Lord despatched Sunanda to enlighten the king to pay Yama's share. He went there, advised the king and came back once again near (the Lord).

53-54. Having consoled Yama thus, Viṣṇu vanished there itself. Brahmā also consoled Yama himself and allowed him (to go) quickly. He was extremely surprised and he went to his abode along with his followers. Somewhat delighted in his mind, Yama went back to his city.

55-57. Thereafter, urged by the directive of Viṣṇu and the advice tendered by Sunanda, all the people who observe holy rites of Vaiśākha give the share (unto Yama).

If men do not honour Dharmarāja (and offer the share), he himself takes away their merit accruing from Vaiśākha rites. Everyday in the month of Vaiśākha the devotee should take his holy bath and offer *Arghya* to Yama. If this is done there is merit; otherwise everything shall be futile.

58. At the outset a pot filled with water and cooked rice mixed with curds should be offered by people to Dharmarāja on the full-moon day in the month of Vaiśākha.

59-60. Afterwards the man should offer the same on behalf of the manes and his preceptor. Thereafter, he should offer the same to Lord Janārdana, the slayer of Madhu. Cold water, cooked rice mixed with curds, betel leaves, fruits and monetary gifts—all placed in a bell-metal vessel should be given to a Brāhmaṇa.

61-63. He should give a divine image of the deity Madhusūdana to a Brāhmaṇa who expounds the monthly holy rites and may happen to suffer due to poverty. The devotee should honour the same expounder of holy rites with all his riches.

Thus directed by Sunanda, the king did everything accordingly. He spent the remaining part of his life enjoying all worldly pleasures as he pleased. Accompanied by sons, grandsons and others

he went to Hari's abode.

64-67a. When that king went to Vaikuṇṭha, the base ruler Vena became king. All the holy rites, particularly the Vaiśākha rites, were destroyed by that vicious one. They lost their popularity on the earth once again. They were mostly the cause of salvation. No one knew these splendid holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha.

The mind will become fervently inclined towards Vaiśākha holy rites only when the merits acquired in the course of many births fructify.

Maithila said:

67b-69. Indeed the vicious king Vena was present in the earlier Manvantara. This king, the scion of the family of Ikṣvāku, is present in this Vaivasvata Manvantara. This has been heard by me before. It is being described by you now also. He (Kīrtimān) has gone to Vaikuṇṭha; Vena will be the king afterwards. (How can this be?) O Śrutadeva of great intellect, clear this doubt.[1]

Śrutadeva replied:

70-72. There is conflict in Purāṇas only because of this difference in the arrangement of Yugas and Kalpas. You shall not have any doubt about its authenticity, if the story happens to involve (apparent) contradictions.

When the daily Kalpa has passed(?), this (story) is permanent and splendid. It was narrated to me by Mārkaṇḍeya and that has been recounted to you, O king.

Hence the Vaiśākha rites should not become popular. Only one (among many) will know it. He will be unattached (to the worldly pleasures). He will be devoted to Viṣṇu.

1. Purāṇas have conflicting versions of the same story and the usual explanation is their occurrence in different Yugas and Kalpas (see vv 70-72).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Liberation of a Piśāca

Śrutadeva said:

1-6. He who takes the holy bath in the morning in the month of Vaiśākha when the Sun is in Aries, worships Madhusūdana and listens to this story of Hari, shall be rid of all sins and go to the highest region of Viṣṇu.[1]

He who leaves off (in the middle) when the story (of Viṣṇu) is being read and expounded and stupidly resorts to any other thing shall fall into Raurava Naraka and then he is born as a Piśāca (evil spirit). In this context they cite this ancient traditional legend as an illustration. This story is destructive of sins. It is holy and conducive to virtue. It is an ancient tale which should be respected forthwith.

Formerly, on the banks of Godāvarī in the splendid holy place of Brahmeśvara there lived two holy spiritual preceptors, the disciples of Durvāsas, well-known in all the three worlds as Satyaniṣṭha, and Taponiṣṭha.[2] They were firmly devoted to Supreme Brahman. They were always devoted to the Upaniṣadic teachings. They were indifferent (to worldly pleasures). They were meritorious. They subsisted only on what was received as alms. Both of them lived in a cave.

7-11. Of these two, Satyaniṣṭha was always devoted to the stories of Viṣṇu. Even if there were no listeners or expounders, the great sage used to carry on (leisurely) his daily round of duties. If there was even one listener, he used to expound to him (Viṣṇu's story) day and night.

If anyone expounded the auspicious and meritorious story of Viṣṇu, he used to curtail his religious rites and listen to the story, because he was interested in listening to the same.

He used to avoid going to pilgrim centres and sacred shrines situ-

1. The object of this chapter is to describe the importance of early bath in the month of Vaiśākha.

2. Out of these Satyaniṣṭha realized by Upaniṣadic studies the importance of devotion to Viṣṇu and became less inclined to Karmakāṇḍa. He is a representative of the cult of Viṣṇu-bhakti (vv 7-22), while Taponiṣṭha as a staunch adherent to the path of Karma, did not care to hear Viṣṇu tales and thereby became a Piśāca (vv 23-31).

ated very far off, because they conflicted with his interest in the stories (of Viṣṇu). He avoided performing most of the rites. He used to listen to the divine stories and to expound them to listeners himself. O king, excepting the stories (of God), he did not know anything else worthy of being resorted to.

12. If, being afflicted with sickness, an expounder (of Viṣṇu-stories) happened to give discourse in his house (instead of in a public place like a temple), the sage resorted to bath at a well and was devoted to listen to the stories.

13-17. At the conclusion of the story, he used to perform his (religious and other) duties duly.

One who habitually listens to the holy stories does not get involved in bondage of births. He shall attain intrinsic purity. Absence of attachment to Viṣṇu will disappear. Attachment to Viṣṇu and friendship with saintly people shall be engendered. The attributeless Brahman free from Rajoguṇa will be retained in the heart immediately. Karma is futile in the case of a man devoid of perfect knowledge. Even if it is performed in diverse ways repeatedly, it will be like showing a mirror to a blind man.

Karma repeatedly performed by those whose hearts are absorbed in deep meditation shall definitely be conducive to the purity of nature. Due to the purity of nature capacity to listen will improve. By listening one attains perfect knowledge and then he becomes competent to meditate.

18-23a. *Śravaṇa* (listening), *Dhyāna* (meditation) and *Manana* (reflection) have been laid down in the Vedas in many places.

If there is no (narration of) tales of Viṣṇu, if there are no good men, that place should undoubtedly be abandoned even if it be the banks of Gaṅgā itself.

If in any land there is no Tulasī plant, nor the auspicious abode of Viṣṇu, nor the (narration of) story of Viṣṇu, a person who dies there shall attain dense darkness (i.e. hell).

If in any village there is no abode (temple) of Viṣṇu, nor a black antelope, nor the story of Viṣṇu, nor saintly people knowing it, one who dies there shall immediately be reborn as a dog and continue thus for a hundred births.

The sage (Satyaniṣṭha) pored over the Upaniṣad Texts and pondered over the teachings therein and came to this decision. He was always attached to the tales of Viṣṇu; he was devoted to the memory of Viṣṇu. He did not consider anything superior to this listening.

23b-27. The other one, Taponiṣṭha, strictly adhered to the rituals. He was foolishly obstinate. He did not expound, nor listen to good tales (of Viṣṇu) himself. He left off even while the story was being expounded and set out for holy bath in Tīrthas.

At a Tīrtha too, when the tale was begun, O king, he used to go far off due to the fear of omission of holy rituals because of fickleness.

After coming into contact with him people used to go for doing their domestic activities. There were no listeners or expounders (of tales of Viṣṇu) at his side but only Karmins (those interested only in performing riturals—Karmas).

The time of that evil-minded, vicious (sage) passed off thus. The tale of the Lord did never reach his tongue or ear.

28-31. The sage later on died and immediately became a *Piśāca* (Evil Spirit) on account of his Adharma since he was not one who listened to or expounded (divine stories) and because he was vicious and pertinacious. He then occupied a Śamī tree. He was named Chinnakarṇa (one with ears cut: deaf). He was not strong. He had no support. He did not get anything to eat. His throat, lips and palate were parched. He underwent torture thus for more than ten thousand years according to divine reckoning. He did not see anyone ready to save him. He continued to be devoid of food. He was extremely miserable.

Thinking about what he had done he wandered like one inebriated and mad. Wandering here and there and oppressed with hunger, that evil spirit of deluded intellect did not attain peace and happiness.

32-34. Wind that blew against that spirit that had no control over itself, was like fire (scorching) his limbs. Water appeared (extremely hot) like fire of universal destruction. Fruits, flowers etc. appeared like poison. This Karmaṭha ('one who valued Karma very much') did not attain happiness anywhere. He was excessively dejected in mind.

When these things were like this in that forest devoid of people, in that spot devoid of (divine) tales and good men, in the place which he had resorted to, Satyaniṣṭha came then to the city of Paiṭhinasī.[1]

35-36. Going along the path he saw Chinnakarṇa who was subjected to a great deal of suffering. On seeing him crying due to hunger and appearing sick and depressed causing the melting of his heart, he spoke to him, "Do not be afraid". Then the great sage said: "Who are you? Why have you come to this plight? You will have no more suffering."

37-42. On being consoled by him thus Chinnakarṇa who was exceed-

1. Paiṭhan in Aurangabad Distt. of Maharashtra.

ingly agitated said thus: "I am Taponiṣṭha, an ascetic and disciple of Durvāsas. I was a resident of the holy spot Brahmeśvara strictly devoted to Karma. I was foolishly pertinacious. Since I was afraid of break in my performance of rituals out of foolishness, O sage, the meritorious story of Viṣṇu that was being expounded by good men was not at all honoured by me, foolish that I was. The story that destroys Karma was not expounded to the listeners. As a result of the great fructification of those Karmas I met with death. I became a Piśāca, Chinnakarṇa by name. I am agitated and bewildered due to misery. I do not find any saviour to redeem me from this misery somehow. Fortunately I have been seen by you. I have become free from sins. Today deities are pleased with me. The preceptors, good men and Hari too are delighted with me today, since I met you."

43-48a. He then fell at his feet on the ground crying "Save me, save me." Then Satyaniṣṭha of great fame was overwhelmed with pity. With his extremely pleasing and blissful pair of arms the great sage raised him up. Then water was ceremoniously sipped and the excellent merit that he had acquired in the course of a Muhūrta by listening to the greatness of the month of Vaiśākha was given to him. As a result of the power of that merit all his inauspiciousness was destroyed immediately. He was released from the form of Piśāca. He assumed a divine body. He got into a divine aerial chariot. After bowing down to that great sage, he took leave of him and circumambulated him. Then he went to the great region of Viṣṇu.

Thereafter, the intelligent Satyaniṣṭha went to the city of Paiṭhinasī repeatedly thinking about the efficacy of listening to the greatness (of the Vaiśākha rites).

Śrutadeva said:

48b-50. Where there is the meritorious and splendid story of Viṣṇu that dispels the impurities of the world, all the holy spots and Tīrthas of diverse kinds are present there. Where the holy river of the meritorious and splendid story of Viṣṇu flows, salvation is within the reach of the people staying in that land. There is no doubt about it.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Story of a Ruler of Pāñcāladeśa

Śrutadeva said:

1-5. Listen further, O king, to the sin-destroying supreme efficacy of the month of Vaiśākha, a great favourite of Viṣṇu.

Formerly in the land of Pāñcāla, there was a king named Puruyaśas.[1] He was son of Bhūriyaśas who was intelligent and righteous.

When his father passed away, O king, he was installed in the kingdom. He was eager to maintain Dharma. He was endowed with the qualities of heroism and liberal-mindedness. He was an expert in the science of archery. The highly intelligent king ruled the entire earth through his pious and righteous activities.

Since he had not offered water (to the needy) in the previous birth, he had incurred a great fault.[2] O sinless one, after a lapse of some time, he suffered a great loss of wealth. Horses and elephants met with death after being afflicted with a fatal disease.

6. A great famine of unprecedented fury swept the land and the entire realm was denuded of its population. The kingdom and treasury became empty like a wood-apple (tree) eaten up by an elephant.

7-9. On coming to know that the king had become weak and bereft of strong army, treasury and (stable) kingdom, hundreds of other kings, the enemies of this king, thought that that was the proper time to defeat him. They came in and conquered the overlord of Pāñcāla land in battle.

Defeated by them, the king resorted to mountain caves along with his wife Śikhinī and accompanied by nurses and other attendants.

10-14. Others could not know his whereabouts. He was agitated on account of various kinds of miseries. Remaining concealed thus, he spent fifty-three years.

The king pondered over the why and wherefore (of his condition) on many occasions. (He thought thus:)

'I am pure by birth and activity. I am engaged in the welfare of my parents. I am a sincere devotee of my preceptors. I am endowed with

1. Though no such king is traced in Purāṇic dynasties that ruled Pāñcāla, the object of the author is to emphasize the efficacy of Vaiśākha-Vrata. Pāñcāla is modern Rohilkhand (De 145).

2. Arrangement for distribution or supply of cool water in the hot month of Vaiśākha is a part of Vaiśākha-Vrata. The king failed to make it in his previous birth. Hence he met with calamities mentioned in vv 5-10.

chivalry and courtesy. I am a benefactor of Brāhmaṇas. I am interested in Dharma. I am kind and considerate towards all living beings. I am a devotee of Devas and have conquered the sense-organs. Neither my brother nor my son nor my friends are my well-wishers now, although I am of noble birth and they are famous for their kindness and manliness. Why? For what Karma has poverty overtaken me? It gives me much misery. Why have I suffered defeat? What is the reason for my stay in the forest?'

15-19. Worried by these thoughts, the king remembered his preceptors. He was utterly dejected. Two excellent sages named Yāja and Upayājaka who were omniscient, highly intelligent, eminent sages and who were invited by the king, came there. On seeing them the lord of Pāñcāla got up promptly. With great devotion, he bent down his head. He had been excessively afflicted on account of his exile. He was devoid of all royal insignia. His whereabouts were not known to anyone. He stood silent for a short while and fell on the ground at their feet. With their hands they raised him up and wiped off the tears from his eyes. With the splendid materials available in the forest he duly worshipped them. Bowing down with humility he asked those Brāhmaṇas when they were comfortably seated:

20-23. "O ye Brāhmaṇas, tell me the cause of my misery. I was lord of the earth. I am pure by birth and activity. I am a favourite of the manes and Devas. I am afraid of sins. I am compassionate. I am a devotee of my preceptors. Still, why am I beset with poverty, loss of treasury and humiliation at the hands of my enemies? What is the reason for my exile in the forest? What is the reason for my loneliness? I have no son. I have no brother. I have no well-wishers. I have no friends: Why was there a famine in the splendid land protected and administered by me? Explain this in detail. Tell me the reasons, O eminent sages."

24. On being asked thus by the king who was extremely miserable, those noble-souled excellent sages meditated for a short while and then replied:

Yāja and Upayājaka said:

25. Listen, O king. We shall tell you the cause of your misery. In all the previous ten births you were a highly sinful hunter.[1]

1. Karmavāda is a basic belief in Hinduism (Buddhism & Jainism as well). The circumstances in this birth are explained as a result of acts in previous births. Such stories are found in Pāli and Ardhamāgadhī also (e.g. *Jātaka Tales*).

26. You were ruthless and always engaged in violently injuring all the people in the world. You did not perform even the slightest and smallest of holy rites at all. You had no control over the sense-organs or the mind.

27. Your tongue did not utter the names of Viṣṇu in any way. Your mind did not remember the lotus-like pair of feet of Govinda.

28. You never bowed down your head to the Supreme Ātman. Like this, O king, nine of your births passed by, when you continued to be vicious.

29. In the tenth birth you were a hunter on the Sahya mountain. You were pitiless towards all the people in the world. You were like the god of Death unto all men.

30. You were devoid of mercy. You lived by means of your weapons. You were always after violence and harmful activities. You had no good qualities at all. You were knavish and accompanied by your wife you harassed wayfarers.

31-36. You were like a man-eating Rākṣasa to the subjects belonging to Gauḍa land.[1] Thus years rolled by in your ignorance of what was conducive to your own welfare.

Since you had been mercilessly killing infants, children, animals and birds and were very vicious, no son was born to you in this birth. Since you had been treacherous previously, you have no uterine brothers. Since you had been harassing wayfarers, you are now devoid of friendly people. Since you had been disrespecting and reproaching good people, you have now been defeated by enemies. Poverty has beset you and your abode (family) on account of the sinful defect of having never given (anything to anyone). Since you had always caused agony and heart-burn (to others), you have had to undergo the unbearable sufferings of exile. Since you had displeased all, a misery exceedingly impossible to bear has beset you now. Your (present) inability to take food is also due to the same reason. Formerly you were very cruel in all your activities. Hence, O highly intelligent one, you have been deprived of your kingdom in the course of this birth.

37-42. I shall tell reasons also for your birth in a good and noble family.

When you were an inhabitant of the Gauḍa land during your ulti-

1. The association of the Sahya mountain with Gauḍadeśa (vide vv 37-42 also) can be explained if we accept a Southern Gauḍa on the bank of Kāverī mentioned in *Padma Purāṇa* (De 63).

mate birth as a hunter, you engaged in your own job of ruthless (killing of everyone) in the forest full of thorns. You stood on the path as the merciless annihilator of all living beings.

At that time two rich and brilliant Vaiśyas came that way. They were afflicted with heat. A sage named Karṣaṇa who had mastered the Vedas and the Vedāṅgas also had come. He had matted hair and was clad in bark garments. The meritorious sage had the sole possession of a waterpot. On seeing these, you took up your bow and stood there obstructing their path. You rushed at the Vaiśyas and pierced their bodies with your arrows. You killed one of them and seized all his cash and other possessions. When you attempted to kill the other one, he hurriedly fled out of fear. He hid the cash and the valuable possessions in a hedge. Utterly frightened, he tried to save his life.

43-51a. Afraid that he would be killed by the hunter, the sage Karṣaṇa hurriedly ran in the hot sun. He was oppressed by heat and thirst. He perspired profusely and then swooned. He was only very slightly conscious. The Vaiśya, eager to save his life, left the sage and fled.

You pursued them. But on seeing the Brāhmaṇa unconscious on the path you wanted to ask him, "Where are the valuable possessions kept hidden? How far has the merchant gone?" In order to ask him about this, you attempted to revive the Brāhmaṇa who was too much tired. You blew into his ears and put powdered ginger to make him recollect properly. You wiped his eyes with the water from the puddle full of mud and worms. As he lay tired, you fanned his face with leaves. After making the sage conscious, you felt mentally relieved and spoke to him:

"Do not be afraid or suspicious of me in this forest, because I hold weapons. One who is poor and without any possessions is happy in this world. Wherefore need you be afraid so much? Nothing will I gain from an old broken pot. O learned one, say only this much. Where has that merchant fled? In which hedge is the valuable possession hidden by him as he fled hurriedly. I will kill you if you tell a lie."

Karṣaṇa said:

51b-55. The wealth is hidden in (this) hedge. He fled by this path.

So said he out of fear and desire to save his life, when he was so questioned. (You told the Brāhmaṇa,) "Go happily along this path, O Brāhmaṇa. You need not be afraid of me at all. A little farther from here, there is excellent water in a lake. Drink that pure water and be

relieved of your fatigue. Then go to the village. Now itself royal officials will be coming along this path. They will be engaged in tracing my footsteps after hearing the shrieks and shouts of the prominent merchant. It is not possible for me to accompany you, O Brāhmaṇa, although you are oppressed by thirst. Fan yourself with this leaf. The heat will subside a little."

56-57. You went away into the forest again after giving him the Palāśa (leaf-fan?) (*Butea frondoza*). This was your meritorious deed during the month of Vaiśākha with oppressive heat, though the same was performed for the sake of your own selfish ends. It resulted in saving the sage on the way. By the power of this merit you took birth in the highly meritorious and big royal family.

58-63. If you wish for happiness, kingdom, wealth, foodgrains and other riches, heavenly pleasures, salvation, Sāyujya with Hari or the region of Hari, perform the holy rites prescribed for the month of Vaiśākha. You will obtain all sorts of happiness. This is the month named Vaiśākha. This is the third day called *Akṣayā* (i.e. Akṣaya-Tṛtīyā).

Fetch a cow that has delivered a calf only and give it to a Brāhmaṇa who is undergoing sufferings. Thereby your treasury will become filled up. Donate a bed; you will gain happiness. Make the gift of an umbrella; you will get back your empire. Take the holy bath in accordance with the injunctions. Similarly worship Mādhava. Get an excellent idol made and give it away. Thereby you will be victorious. If, O king, you desire to have sons having good qualities on a par with those of yours, make a gift of Prapās (free-water booths) for the sake of the welfare of all living beings. Scrupulously perform all these holy rites prescribed for the month of Vaiśākha.

64-68a. Thereby all the worlds will be under your control. There is no doubt about it.

If you perform these holy rites with a mind free from desires, in the meritorious month of Vaiśākha, for the gratification of the Slayer of Madhu, Viṣṇu will become visible to you as your mind is devoid of impurities.

The seers mentioned in the Purāṇas know that everlasting worlds will be attained by those people who have performed all these excellent holy rites. All this has been recounted to you as we have seen and heard.

After saying this the Brāhmaṇa priests Yāja and Upayājaka took leave of him and went away the way they came.

68b-70. Then the king of great prowess, enlightened by his preceptors, performed all the Vaiśākha rites with great faith. He worshipped the Slayer of Madhu in the manner he had been advised.

Thereupon he regained his power. Surrounded by all his kinsmen and accompanied by the survivors of the army, he reached the city of Pāñcāla.

71. His old enemies, the kings (of neighbouring realms), heard that this king had re-entered his city. Therefore, they haughtily came (to attack him).

72. A battle ensued between those kings and the king of Pāñcāla. That great warrior single-handedly conquered all the mighty kings.

73. When those kings fled along the paths leading to different realms, this powerful king confiscated the treasuries, horses and elephants of those kings.

74-76. He brought to the city one hundred millions of horses, thirty millions of elephants, one hundred millions of chariots and ten thousand camels as well as three hundred thousand donkeys. Due to the greatness of the Vaiśākha rites all the kings were suddenly turned into payers of taxes. They were crushed under his feet and their plans were smashed and frustrated. There was unprecedented and matchless prosperity in the Pāñcāla land.

77. He held sway over all the realms brought under a single umbrella. With the favour of the Slayer of Madhu he begot five sons endowed with the qualities of heroism and liberal-mindedness.

78. They were Dhṛṣṭakīrti, Dhṛṣṭaketu, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Vijaya and Citraketu. They were all on a par with Kārttikeya.

79. The subjects who were virtuously protected became lovingly attached to him. By the efficacy of Vaiśākha, he instantaneously gained the credence of all.

80. Again the lord of Pāñcālanagara performed those holy rites with a mind free from any desire whatsoever, for the gratification of the Slayer of Madhu.

81. Delighted with this holy rite, Lord Madhusūdana appeared before him on the Akṣaya Tṛtīyā day.

82. On seeing Acyuta, the Supreme Ātman, Nārāyaṇa with four arms holding the conch, discus, iron club etc. he became awe-struck.

83-85. The Lord clad in yellow robes was adorned with garlands of sylvan flowers. He was seated on Garuḍa along with all his followers as well as Goddess Lakṣmī.

On seeing the unbearable refulgence, he immediately closed his eyes. He began to dance with delight. He moved about and whirled like

a mad and inebriate man. All his limbs were marked with horripilation. Tears welled up in his eyes. He prostrated on the ground. With palms joined in reverence he eulogized with great devotion.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Pāñcāla King Attains Sāyujya

Śrutadeva said:

1-3. With his mind flooded with the delight at his vision, the king got up immediately and bowed down his head. With his excited eyes he looked at the Supreme Lord of the worlds, the immanent soul of the universe, for a long time. He washed his feet and held that water on his head. Indeed the river that arises from his feet sanctifies the entire universe including Brahmā. He worshipped the Lord with plenty of materials, very costly and invaluable garments, ornaments and unguents, garlands, incense, lights and nectar-like foodstuffs etc. He dedicated unto the Lord his entire person, limbs, wealth and his very soul. He eulogized Viṣṇu, the ancient Puruṣa, Nārāyaṇa, devoid of Guṇas, one without a second:

4. "I salute the unsullied overlord of the makers of the universe,[1] the supreme one, saluted by the Lotus-born Lord and others. I salute the overlord of the creators of the universe, whose Māyā has deluded excellent men conversant with reality.

5. Wonderful indeed is the activity of the Lord. Stupid ones become deluded in the Guṇas activized by the Māyā. The one and only Lord devoid of desires and ambition creates by himself this (visible universe) in diverse forms, protects it and consumes it. He is not defiled thereby.

6-7. You are one who have completely realized your desires. Yet, for the sake of the acquisition of happiness by Devas and misery by all the Asuras (you do endeavour). In that connection, at the proper

1. The eulogy of Viṣṇu is a blend of Upaniṣadic and Purāṇic concepts of the deity and the influence of Māyāvāda. The outpourings of the heart of a sincere Bhakta (devotee) in this prayer are touching.

time, you adopt Sattva Guṇa for the sake of protecting your own people; for the sake of curbing the rogues and knaves you adopt Tamoguṇa and for the sake of binding the Rākṣasas you adopt Rajoguṇa, O Cosmic-formed One, devoid of Guṇas. Fortunately, your foot is destructive of the sins of those who bow down. When it is held in the heart by means of well-practised and (highly advanced) mature Yogic exercises, it becomes the abode of Tīrthas.

8-10. Those who have matured well by means of devotion their emotional existence as individual souls, have attained salvation merely by remembering your feet.

But I am fettered by the noose of the deadly black serpent called worldly existence accompanied by the repeatedly recurring births, old age and other miseries. I wander from one species of beings to another because I have forgotten your feet. My yearning (for worldly pleasures) increases like that of a mouse on seeing the edible stuff (plaçed in front of it for trapping it). Certainly no charitable gift has been given by me; nor your story has been heard. No honourable men of good disposition have ever been served by me. Therefore my vast fortune and glory was destroyed by enemies and I entered the forest. Recollecting my enormous sins, I remembered my preceptors. When they were remembered they approached me. They are the kinsmen of the distressed ones. They addressed me (and consoled me).

11. They enlightened me in the splendid Vaiśākha rites laid down in the Śrutis. They are the causes of attaining the aims of life such as heavenly pleasures, salvation etc. Induced by them I have performed all the holy rites pertaining to the month of Vaiśākha conducive to auspiciousness.

12-14. Hence, I have been enormously favoured. There have come all these excellent riches. Neither fire, nor the sun, nor the moon and the stars, nor the earth, nor water, nor ether, nor wind, neither speech nor mind (are like you). On being served they remove sin after a long time. Learned ones destroy (sins) when they are served only for a short while. But you consider these learned men *Bhavins* (men engrossed in worldly existence), though they have mostly eschewed their desires and kept their minds fixed in your feet.

Obeisance to the independent one of wonderfully variegated activities. Obeisance to the greatest one blessing the noble ones. Deluded by your Māyā, I have my vision riveted to meaningless objects. Hence I wander among the Guṇas in the form of wives and wealth.

15-19. I do so in spite of the fact that your lotus-like feet are the

destroyer of the root cause, Avidyā. You are the dispeller of all the sins and are devoid of impurities. With a desire for happiness I am possessed of 'My-ness' with respect to sons and wives who are but the causes of calamities.

A person engrossed in worldly pursuits with increased thirst and desire for the same, does not get peaceful sleep or welfare. Though I have been born a king, which is rare, though you are the cause of the attainment of all aims of life involving effort, I do not worship your lotus-like feet because my mind is deluded and I am covetous of worldly pleasures. I perform my duties firmly and devotedly, but yearning for pleasures does increase proportionately.

'I shall become again (a more prosperous one); I shall today become one'—such and hundreds of similar thoughts make my mind waver. At that time, O Lord, let there be your mercy on the individual soul. O Lord of cosmic form, your power is limitless.

By your mercy there shall be the association of great men whereby the ocean of worldly existence becomes a small pit made by the hoofs of cows. Once there is the association with good people, O Lord, the mind is inclined towards you, the lord and master.

20. I consider, the removal of the entire kingdom (from my possession) has become a blessing to me, got easily from you because you are being approached by Brahmā, Suras and Asuras and hosts of honourable and saintly men, when they cease to have thirst and yearning (for worldly pleasures).

21. Hereafter, I shall remember only Acyuta with eagerness and respect. O Lord, your lotus-like feet are destructive of worldly existence. They are worthy of being prayed to by impoverished persons. They bestow a great deal of fortune. I do not desire anything other than your lotus-like feet.

22. Therefore I do not desire the kingdom, the treasury, sons etc. (I have nothing to do) with the body that falls always (i.e. is transient) and that is the result of Rajoguṇa. I continuously worship those lotus-like feet which are fit to be pondered upon and adored by sages.

23. O Lord of Devas, O abode of the universe, be pleased so that I shall always remember your lotus-like feet. O my Lord, let my attachment for these groups cease, the groups symbolized by wives, sons and wealth.

24-26. Let my mind be directed towards the lotus-like feet of Kṛṣṇa; my speech to the narration of your divine story; these eyes of mine in viewing your form and image; the ears in listening to your stories; and

the tongue towards what has been offered to you (as *Naivedya*); my nose towards the fragrance of your lotus-like feet; my hands shall be engaged in applying the unguents etc. frequently on your devotees as well as in sweeping and other activities in your temple permanently. Let my feet be engaged in going to the holy spots of the Lord as well as to the places where the story of the Lord (is being recited). Let my head be engaged in saluting you constantly. Let my love be directed towards your holy story. Let my intellect be turned towards constant thought on you.

27. Let my days dawn with your stories being sung by sages who come to my abode. Let there not be even a moment or half of it devoid of episodes about you, O Viṣṇu.

28. I do not crave or yearn for the position of Brahmā or that of an emperor. I do not wish for salvation too, O Viṣṇu. I earnestly desire for perpetual service of your feet, which is requested for even by Śrī and Suras including Brahmā, Bhava etc."

29. On being eulogized by the king thus, the delighted lotus-eyed Viṣṇu spoke to that king in a voice as majestic as the sound of a cloud.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

30. I know that you are the most excellent one among my servants. You are free from desires and sins. Still I shall grant you a boon inaccessible even to Devas.

31. You will have a life of ten thousand years, O king, according to the reckoning of Devas. You will have riches. Your devotion to me shall be steady. In the end you will have Sāyujya.

32. There is no doubt about this that I will grant worldly pleasures and salvation to those who eulogize me with this prayer composed by you. I shall be delighted with them.

33. This Tṛtīyā (third lunar day) shall become well-known in the world by the name Akṣaya,[1] being the day on which I am delighted with you and have granted worldly pleasures and salvation.

34. Even ignorant men who perform such holy rites as ablution, charitable gifts etc. naturally or under some pretext, attain my immutable region.

35. If men perform Śrāddha rites with the manes in view on the Akṣayatṛtīyā day, that will be conducive to infinite benefit.

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1. VV 33-38 glorify the importance of Akṣaya Tṛtīyā day.

36. There is no other *Tithi* in the world equal or superior to this. Even if very little is done on this day, it shall have everlasting benefit.

37. If, O excellent king, anyone gives a cow to a Brāhmaṇa householder, worldly pleasures showering all sorts of riches as well as salvation shall be within his reach.

38. He who gives away a bullock, destructive of all sins, shall be liberated from death and he shall attain long life.

39. If persons perform holy rites causing pleasure to me in the month of Vaiśākha, I dispel the fear of death, birth and old age of those persons.

40. I am not delighted with the rites of all other months as much as with the Vaiśākha rites. The month of Vaiśākha is my most favourite month.

41. Those who have forsaken all other holy rites and those who are devoid of the vow of celibacy, attain my immutable region, if only they are engaged in holy rites pertaining to the month of Vaiśākha.

42. Men engaged in Vaiśākha rites attain that great abode which is very difficult to attain by means of sacrifices, austerities and Sāṅkhya and Yoga.

43. Just like the remembrance of my feet, O sinless one, this month removes even a thousand sins without expiatory rites.

44-46. You became engaged in the Vaiśākha rites on being advised by your preceptors in the forest and you propitiated the Lord of the universe. Thereby everything was obtained by you, O king. Pleased with this holy rite I have become visible to you. You shall enjoy all worldly pleasures, as you please. They are difficult to be obtained even by Devas.

After having granted boons to him thus, Janārdana, the Lord of Devas, vanished there itself even as all were watching.

47-51. Thereupon, this excellent king became extremely surprised, O king. Like one who has regained the wealth that was lost, he became delighted and strong in the body. Everyday he was enlightened by great men and his own preceptors.

He ruled the earth with his mind dwelling on him and with him as his greatest resort. The king did not love anyone better than Vāsudeva by whose contact alone wives, ministers, sons and others became pleasing to him. He performed all the holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha again and again. As a result of the merit thereof, he was surrounded by sons, grandsons and others. He enjoyed all his desires

inaccessible even to Devas. In the end he attained Sāyujya with the Lord holding the discus.

52. All those who listen to or expound this great narrative shall be rid of sins, and then attain the greatest region of Viṣṇu.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Story of Dantila and Kohala

Śrutakīrti said:

1. O bestower of honour, I am not fully satisfied on hearing about all holy rites of Vaiśākha that yield benefit both here and hereafter.

2. There is no satiety in listening to that sacred text that contains truthful instructions about Dharma and splendid and auspicious stories of Viṣṇu.

3. The meritorious deeds done (by me) in the previous births have fortunately matured, because you have come to my abode in the guise of a guest.

4. After having heard the exceedingly wonderful nectarine words issuing from your lotus-like mouth, I am fully contented. I do not desire the position of Brahmā or even salvation.

5. Hence recount in their fullest detail those holy rites that bestow worldly pleasures and liberation, rites that are exceedingly good and cause delight to Viṣṇu.

6. On being told thus formerly by the king, Śrutadeva of great renown, became delighted in his mind and began to recount the auspicious holy rites once again.

Śrutadeva said:

7. Listen, O king, I shall narrate the story that is destructive of sins. It has the Vaiśākha rites for its theme, which have been discussed frequently by sages.

8. On the banks of Paṁpā there was a certain Brāhmaṇa of great reputation named Śaṅkha. When Jupiter entered the Zodiac Leo, he came to the auspicious river Godāvarī.[1]

1. Hindus believe that when Jupiter enters Zodiac Leo, Gaṅgā visits Godāvarī and pilgrims flock to Godāvarī to have a bath therein, as it is a bath in Gaṅgā itself.

9-13. After crossing the holy Bhīmarathī he reached the forest Kaṇṭakācala. It was a place devoid of people and water. In the terrible month of Vaiśākha he became oppressed with the heat. At midday that Brāhmaṇa sat at the foot of a tree.

Then a certain roguish hunter of evil conduct came there holding a bow (in his hand). He was devoid of mercy for all living beings. He was like another Kāla, the annihilator.

The Brāhmaṇa who was initiated in holy rites wore rings in his ears. He was resplendent like the sun. On seeing the Brāhmaṇa, the hunter of fierce temperament bound him down and seized the ear-rings. He snatched off his sandals, umbrella, rosary of beads and waterpot. Afterwards he released the Brāhmaṇa saying, "Go away". Such was the hunter of deluded intellect.

14. He went along the path full of pebbles, scorched by the sun, rough and rugged and devoid of water. His feet were oppressed by the heat. That Brāhmaṇa of sublimated sexual instinct walked slowly resting in places where grass grew and covered the ground.

15-19. At times he ran quickly; in some places he was relieved and happy and in some places sadly exclaimed, Hā ! Hā ! Thus he moved hurriedly.

On seeing the sage suffering thus when the sun was in the middle of the sky, the hunter who was averse to piety and evil in intention usually, pitied him to a certain extent. He thought thus, 'I shall give him the comfortable footwear which I had taken away in the other forest. This has been righteously agreed by hunters that everything belongs to him alone who snatches by force and robs it. Therefore, I shall give away the sandals for the sake of lessening his suffering. If any merit comes from the act, let it be mine, of this sinner. These are two worn-out sandals on my feet. I have nothing to do with them. Therefore I shall give them away.' He decided like this in his mind, went to him immediately and gave them to the excellent Brāhmaṇa whose feet had been scorched by the heated pebbles and who was much distressed.

20-25. By taking those sandals, the Brāhmaṇa attained great pleasure. "Be happy", said he to the hunter and blessed him, "Indeed this (hunter) is one whose merit has become mature, because he made this gift in the month of Vaiśākha. Viṣṇu becomes delighted even with a hunter of wicked nature. The happiness that I have now is as though that of having obtained everything."

On hearing these words, the hunter became surprised. He spoke again

to the Brāhmaṇa, the learned, pious expounder of Brahman, "What is yours has been given to you. How can it be meritorious unto me? You praise Vaiśākha and say, Hari becomes delighted. O Brāhmaṇa, tell me what is this Vaiśākha? Who is Hari? What is meant by Dharma? What is the benefit to one who is desirous of hearing, O storehouse of mercy?" On hearing these words of the hunter, Śaṅkha became delighted in his mind.

26-31. Surprised in his mind he praised Vaiśākha again. "Now this roguish hunter has given me the footwear and has acted contrarily to his usual evil-mindedness. It is surprising. All holy rites yield their fruit in the succeeding births, but holy rites of Vaiśākha yield benefit unto men immediately, in a moment.

The hunter is wicked in mind and evil in conduct. Fortunately by making the gift of the sandals he has attained purity of nature.

The rite that is pleasing to Viṣṇu, the rite that is devoid of impurities, the rite that gives satisfaction, that alone, according to Manu and others conversant with Dharma, is Dharma. Those holy rites of the Vaiśākha month are exceedingly pleasing to Viṣṇu.

Keśava is not satisfied with all kinds of gifts, austerities and great sacrifices as much as (he is) with the holy rites of the Vaiśākha month.

32-36. There is no other Dharma like this among all the Dharmas. People need not go to Gayā or to Gaṅgā, Prayāga or Puṣkara. They need not go to the holy spot of Kedāra, Prabhāsa or Syamantaka (Samantapañcaka[1]) at Kurukṣetra.

Do (i.e. you need) not go to Godāvarī or Kṛṣṇā or Setu (Rāmeśvara) or Marudvṛdha[2]. The holy river of (i.e. in the form of) the divine story, praising the greatness of Vaiśākha-Dharma, is very sacred. Viṣṇu is immediately held within the heart of one who takes his holy bath there.

In the month of Vaiśākha much is gained through (doing or offering) very little, that cannot be achieved through charitable gifts, sacrifices or other holy rites involving great expenses (at other times).

O hunter, this month named Mādhava (Vaiśākha) is conducive to the

1. The pools of Kṣatriya blood collected by Paraśurāma for the Tarpaṇa of his Pitṛs (Mbh. *Ādi* 2.4-5; *Vana* 117.9-10). It became a holy Tīrtha by the blessing of Paraśurāma's Pitṛs (Mbh. *Ādi* 2.8-11). This is at Kurukṣetra. According to Mbh. *Ādi* 2.13-15, it came to be called *Samanta-Pañcaka,* as "it marked the end of all (Kṣatriyas) who assembled there (for war)*: sametānām anto yasmin tat samantam.*

2. This river of the Nadi-Sūkta (RV X.III.75.5) is probably modern Maruwardwan, a small rivulet in Kashmir flowing from North to South and joining Chenab near Kashtwar (A. Stein).

increase of merit. In this month these sandals that destroy the distress resulting from heat (of the sun) have been given to me by you.

37-38a. Thereby your merit of the old times has become ripe. Generally, O hunter, the delighted Lord will cause welfare. Otherwise how can you have a splendid inclination of this type?"

38b-43a. Even as the sage was saying thus, a powerful lion urged by god of Death furiously rushed at a tiger to kill it.[1] But seeing an elephant brought there by fate, he attempted to kill him. The lion attacked him with his paw and stood ready (for fighting). O king, a battle ensued between the lion and the elephant in the forest. Having become tired, they stopped fighting and stood staring at each other.

Fortunately they heard what was said by the noble-souled sage to the hunter. It was destructive of all sins. By listening to the greatness of the month they became pure in heart. They were liberated from their sins. Leaving off their bodies, they went to heaven immediately.

43b-47. They had assumed divine forms. They were smeared with divine unguents. They were seated in a divine aerial chariot. They were served by divine damsels. Suddenly they stood with palms joined in reverence and head bowed down before the hunter. The great sage, the expounder of the holy rites, was surprised on seeing them. He stood motionless and said, "Who may you be? How did it happen that you were born in the lower species of animals? How did it happen that both of you died together? With no apparent cause you were engaged in the attempt to kill each other. Describe in detail all these things, O sinless ones."

On being requested thus by that sage they replied as follows:

48-53. "We are sons of Sage Mataṅga[2] called Dantila and Kohala. It was on account of a curse that Dantila and Kohala were reborn (as lion etc.).

We were endowed with handsome features and prime of youth. We were experts in all lores. Our father, the Brāhmaṇa-sage named Mataṅga, an expert in the affairs of Dharma, the most excellent one among those conversant with all holy rites, spoke to us: 'O my sons, in the month of Vaiśākha which is a great favourite of Madhusūdana, erect (free) water-booths on the way, fan the people for a while, make shades on the way, give abundant food and cool water, take holy bath in the

1. The following story illustrates the beneficial effect of hearing the description of *Vaiśākha-dharmas*.

2. This Sage Mataṅga is different from that mentioned in VR, the *guru* of Śabarī or the ones mentioned in Mbh, *Vana* 84.101 or *Anuśāsaña*, Ch. 27.

morning and worship the Lord. Listen to the story (of the Lord) too regularly, whereby the bondage (of Saṁsāra) will cease.'

Thus we were advised by means of various words of advice like these. Still we were vicious. I, Dantila, became angry. This one named Kohala became more furious than I and also haughty.

54-58. Our father who was very devoted to Dharma became angry and cursed us.

He followed this dictum: One should abandon immediately the son who is averse to righteousness, the wife who speaks displeasingly and the king who is averse to Vedic learning and Brāhmaṇas; otherwise he will fall.[1] Out of courteousness or of covetousness for money, those who associate with them fall into hell and remain there for a period of fourteen Indras (a Manvantara). Therefore he cursed us who were overwhelmed with haughtiness and anger.

He said: 'This Dantila who has become angry and is carried away by fury shall be born as a lion. The haughty Kohala shall be a big elephant in rut.' We repented afterwards and requested for liberation. On being entreated by us, our father granted us redemption from the curse.

59-65. 'You will be born in the lower species. After a lapse of some time you will meet together and want to kill each other. At that very time conversation between a hunter and (sage) Śaṅkha will reach your ears. Within a moment you will be liberated. After your redemption, after having assumed your previous forms, O my sons, come back to me and stay with me. My words will not be otherwise.'

Thus we, those two wicked ones, were cursed by our father. We were reborn as lower animals, met together fortunately, became desirous of slaying each other and heard your conversation that was excellent and auspicious. Thereby we were immediately liberated."

Thus they recounted everything, bowed down to the great sage and took leave of him. On being permitted by him, they went to their father. Pointing this out, the sage, the storehouse of mercy, said to the hunter:

66. "See the great benefit of listening to the greatness of Vaiśākha. By listening to it for a short while, liberation came within their reach."

67. While the sage was speaking thus, the hunter laid down his arms before the sage who was a storehouse of mercy, of excellent

1. A traditional Subhāṣita. A number of Subhāṣitas were orally handed down and are found in all Purāṇas. The sources of these stray verses are not traceable.

intellect, devoid of desires, of very pure nature and the sole receptacle of merit.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Previous Birth of the Hunter

The hunter said:

1-4. I have been blessed by you, O sage, (though) I am a sinner and very wicked-minded. Indeed great men are compassionate and good by nature. Where am I, a hunter of ignoble birth? Where is the mind such as this (of yours)? (There is such a great difference between us!) I value only your excellent blessings.

O pious Sir, I am worthy of being guided and instructed by you. O bestower of honour, I am a deserving person to receive your mercy.

I should be blessed. I am your son. Be merciful, O storehouse of mercy, so that I will no longer have this vicious inclination that causes harmful and adverse results. By association with good people no one ever experiences any misery anywhere.

5. Hence, O Brāhmaṇa, enlighten me with such wise sayings as are destructive of sins, whereby those who are desirous of salvation certainly cross the ocean of worldly existence.

6. In the case of honourable and pious men of impartial mind, endowed with kindness and compassion for all living beings, no one is lowly and vulgar or high and excellent; no one is one's own or a stranger.

7-8. Whoever thinks with mental concentration and enquires about (the means of) mental purity and whoever repents even though he may be contaminated by all defects, and though he be deprived of all holy rites, whenever he enquires about this of his preceptors, they immediately impart to him the knowledge that certainly liberates one from the worldly existence.

9. Just as Gaṅgā is the cause of destruction of sins of men, so also pious and noble persons are proclaimed as the natural redeemers of the stupid and dull-witted people.

10. Do not hesitate in the matter of enlightening me, O compassionate one, favourably inclined towards your devotees, as I have a

desire to hear (serve), have bowed down to you and have become pure due to the contact with you.

11. On hearing these words of the hunter, the sage became surprised in his mind once again. After exclaiming "Excellent ! Excellent !" he spoke of these holy rites.

Śaṅkha said:

12. If you wish for welfare, O hunter, perform these holy rites in the month of Vaiśākha. They are excellent and cause delight to Viṣṇu. They liberate the devotees from the ocean of worldly existence.

13-15a. A fierce heat oppresses us here. There is neither shade nor water here. So we shall go to some other place where there is plenty of shade. After drinking water I shall resort to the shade. There I shall describe unto you the greatness (of the holy rites) destructive of sins. I shall recount the greatness of the month of Vaiśākha that pertains to Viṣṇu. I shall recount it in the manner as has been heard and seen (by me).

15b-17. On being told thus by the sage, the hunter said with palms joined in reverence: "A little away from here, there is water in an excellent lake. There are wood-apple trees there fully laden with fruit. We shall go there. There is no doubt about this that you will be satisfied."

On being directed thus by the hunter, the sage went along with him.

18-24a. After going a little distance from there he saw the excellent lake. It was full of cranes and Kāraṇḍava ducks. It was rendered beautiful by ruddy geese. There were swans, Sārasa ducks, storks etc. all round rendering it very splendid. Bamboo-reeds with holes therein produced a loud and sweet musical note along with the humming of bees.

It was very charming with tortoises, crocodiles, fish etc. swimming about. It was a large lake abounding in lilies, blue lotuses, red lotuses, white lotuses etc.

There were hundred-petalled lotuses of the Kokanada variety all round, beautifying the lake splendidly. The sweet chirping sounds of the birds reverberated. The lake was one that afforded the pleasure of a festival unto the eyes.

There were hedges of bamboo reeds and many trees adorning the banks. It was rendered beautiful by various trees such as banyan trees, Karañja, Nīpa, tamarind, margosa, Plakṣa, Priyāla, Campaka, Bakula,

Punnāga, Tumbara, Kapittha, Āmalaka (Emblic Myrobalan), Nīṣpeṣaṇa and Jambū (rose apple tree) all round.

24b-29a. There were many types of animals all round such as wild elephant, deer, boar, buffalo etc. There were hares, porcupines, blue oxen etc. beautifying the place. There were rhinoceroses, musk deer, antelopes etc., tigers, lions, wolves, the fabulous eight-footed Śarabhas that killed donkeys, Camarī deer, etc. adorning the forest all round.

There were monkeys leaping from branch to branch quickly. The place was rendered fearful by (wild) cats and bears as well as Ruru deer. There were the sounds of crickets, the 'Kreṅ' sounds of great harshness as well as the sounds of bamboo reeds. Agitated by violent gusts of winds, the trees produced great rustling sounds.

The tiger among sages, who was much oppressed by thirst, saw the lake of great excellence like this as pointed out by the hunter.

29b-34. He took his midday bath in this fascinating lake and wore his clothes once again. Then he performed religious rites prescribed for midday. After performing the worship of the Lord, he eagerly ate the very tasty wood-apple and other fruits brought by the hunter that dispelled his fatigue.

Thereafter, he seated himself comfortably and asked the hunter who was interested in Dharma: "O (hunter) interested in Dharma, what is it that has to be said by me at the outset to you now? There are many holy rites of several and separate kinds. Among them those holy rites that are specially laid down for the month of Vaiśākha, yield great benefits though they are subtle. They bestow benefits on all living beings both here and hereafter. What you have in your mind as worthy of being asked, ask it at the outset itself".

On being told thus by that sage, the hunter said with palms joined in reverence:

The hunter said:

35-36. What was that Karma as a result of which (I got) this birth as a hunter full of Tamoguṇa? What is the reason for such an inclination as this? How did I come into contact with (you) the noble-souled one? Relate this as well as other things, O holy lord, if you consider me worthy of the same.

On being requested thus, the great sage named Śaṅkha spoke once again in a majestic tone like that of a cloud. There was smile on his lotus-like face.

Śaṅkha said:

37-41. Formerly you were a Brāhmaṇa named Staṁba in the city of Śākala (modern Sialkote, Panjab). You had mastered the Vedas and were very brilliant. You were born of Śrīvatsa Gotra. You had a prostitute as your beloved. On account of the fault of associating with her, you had forsaken your daily rites. You returned home like a Śūdra. You were devoid of good conduct. You were vicious with all holy rites cast off.

You had a Brāhmaṇa wife named Kāntimatī. That beautiful lady served you along with that prostitute (though) you were a base Brāhmaṇa. In order to please you, she washed the feet of both of you. She obeyed the words of both of you. She slept below on the ground allowing both of you to sleep (on the cot).

42-48a. Though she was prevented by that prostitute (your Brāhmaṇa wife) adhered to her chaste activities. Serving her husband and the prostitute together, she continued to be miserable on the earth. A great deal of time elapsed thus.

One day the husband consumed the Māṣa pulse along with radish. Following the custom of Śūdras, he ate the Niṣpāva pulse mixed with gingelly seeds. Having consumed those unwholesome things, he suffered from vomiting and diarrhoea.

On account of the unwholesomeness of the food, he became a prey to the dreadful disease of fistula of anus. On account of that ailment it appeared as though he was being burned day and night.

As long as there was ample wealth in the house, the prostitute continued to stay there, but having deprived him of his wealth, she no longer stayed in his abode. The terrible, merciless courtesan went away and stayed with someone else. Afflicted very much with the ailment, with his mind agitated on account of the pain, he spoke to his wife cryingly in a pitiable tone:

48b-51. "Protect me, O gentle lady, ruthless though I was due to my attachment to a prostitute. O holy and beautiful lady, I have not at all helped you so far. O gentle lady, that despicable sinner who does not honour his wife who bows down to him, shall become a eunuch in the course of fifteen births. O highly fortunate lady, day and night I am censured by honourable and virtuous men. Since I have disrespected a chaste lady like you, I will be reborn of a sinful womb. I burn within myself with the anger arising from the dishonour done to you."

52-55. When her husband said thus, she spoke these words with palms joined in reverence:

"You need not feel any wretchedness or shame, O my husband, on account of me. I do not entertain any anger towards you, wherçby, you say, you burn within yourself. Sins committed previously turn into miseries. A chaste lady or man who brooks the same is the most excellent one. I am (must have been) a sinful woman. If I reap the fruit of sin committed by me in the previous birth, I feel no remorse or sorrow thereby."

Saying thus she rendered all help to her husband.

56. The lady of excellent complexion brought money from her father and other kinsmen (in order to help him). She considered her husband (on a par with) the Lord (Viṣṇu) who resides in the Milk Ocean.

57. By day as well as by night, she regularly washed the urine and excreta of her husband. With her nails, she pulled out slowly the worms (from the ulcer).

58. Neither at night nor during the day did the fair-complexioned lady get a wink of sleep. Sad and dejected on account of the misery of her husband, she said thus:

59-63. "May Devas and Manes who are well-known protect my husband. Let them absolve my husband of sins and free him from sickness. For the sake of the health of my husband, I shall offer to Caṇḍikā excellent and well-cooked food mixed with blood and flesh along with (products of) buffalo-milk. I shall get Modaka sweets prepared for the noble-souled Vighneśa (Gaṇeśa). I shall observe ten fasts on Saturdays. I will not take sweet things. I will not use ghee. I will not smear oil over my body, Undoubtedly I will remain thus. Let this husband of mine live for a hundred years free from ailments."

That gentle lady said like this everyday as it rolled by.

64. Then a noble-souled sage named Devala came to his abode in the evening on a day in the month of Vaiśākha. He was distressed due to heat.

65. At that time your wife said: "The physician has come to our house. Therefore, the sickness will be removed. I shall be hospitable to him."

66. Knowing that you were averse to pious activities, she tricked you and got him in under the pretext that he was a physician. Washing the feet of the sage, she sprinkled the water on your head.

67. Encouraged by you, she gave sweet drink to that noble-souled one, distressed with heat in the evening. It dispelled all the heat.

68. In the morning, when the sun arose, the sage went back on his way. Then within a short while you had an attack of Sannipāta (a

combined derangement of all the humours of the body).

69-74. When she was administering the three pungent substances (ginger, black pepper and long pepper), the husband bit off her finger. The two teeth (upper and lower ones) suddenly came close together. The tender finger remained within the mouth of the husband. After biting the finger off, the husband died on the excellent bed thinking about the beautiful courtesan. On coming to know that her husband was dead, your wife Kāntimatī sold her bangles and bought fuel. The chaste lady made up a funeral pyre thereby, keeping (the dead body of) her husband in the middle. She embraced him with her hands, entwined the feet with his feet, placed her face against his face, kept her chest close to his chest and placed her pudenda over his. Thus placing herself on his body, that auspicious lady burned the sick body of her husband along with that of hers in the burning fire.[1]

75. Embracing her husband, she forsook her body and went to the world of Murāri, due to the merit of giving sweet drink in this month of Vaiśākha, as well as that of washing the feet (of a sage). She attained the world worthy of being attained by Yogins.

76. You got rid of all your sins, but since you were engrossed in the thought of a courtesan at the time of death, you attained the birth as a hunter with a terrible form. You became interested in violence. You always caused heart-burn (to others).

1. The self-immolation of the widow along with the dead body of the husband described here, is called *Satī*. This was a respectable practice in higher castes as recorded in various mediaeval inscriptions. Curiously enough the practice has no Vedic sanction. The two Mantras, RV X.18.8 and AV XVIII.3.1, mention some pre-Vedic custom when the widow, as a formality, used to lie by the side of the deceased husband on the funeral pyre and return to "life". The first 'historical' reference to *Satī*, viz. queen Mādrī's self-immolation with king Pāṇḍu in Mbh, *Ādi* 116.31 is nullified by Mbh, *Ādi* 118.21-22 which states that the dead bodies of Pāṇḍu and Mādrī were brought to Hastināpura and were given a royal funeral on the same pyre. How Mādrī died is a matter of anybody's conjecture. Her inability to fulfil Pāṇḍu's last desire for sexual intercourse must have broken the heart of the pious lady. Old *Gṛhya Sūtras*, and old *Smṛtis* like Manu and Yājñavalkya do not support *Satī*. In the dark middle age of India (to which SkP belongs) the so-called Dharmaśāstra writers even distorted older texts to support widow-burning. Thus Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa in *Nirṇaya Sindhu* quotes an imaginary Manu's authority to advocate widow-burning as an alternative to life-long celibacy of a widow as follows:

brahmacaryaṁ cared vā'pi, pravišed vā hutāšanam /

On the contrary Medhātithi (9th cent. CE), the famous commentator of Manusmṛti, on Manu V.156 plainly states that 'Dying after the husband is against the Vedas' (*śruti-virodho'yam*).

77-78. Permission was given by you for the gift of the sweet drink in the month of Vaiśākha, O (hunter) with a chaste wife. Hence when you were born as a hunter, you had the good inclination of asking about holy rites that cause all happiness. You got your head sprinkled with the water with which the feet of the sage were washed. It was conducive to the destruction of all sins. Therefore, you had the opportunity of contacting me in this forest now, and due to this you will have further riches etc.

79. Thus whatever was done by you in the previous birth has been recounted to you. Your meritorious and sinful Karmas have been seen by me through divine vision.

80. Whatever you wish to hear, I shall recount unto you even if it be a secret. Your mind has become purified, O highly intelligent one. Hail unto you!

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Curse of Wind-god

The hunter said:

1-3. Earlier this was said by you that the splendid holy rites of the Lord should be performed with Viṣṇu in view, and that the Vaiśākha rites are also among them. O Brāhmaṇa, of what nature is that Viṣṇu? What is (his) characteristic feature? What is the proof of his existence? By whom can this great Lord be known? Of what nature are the holy rites of Viṣṇu? By which (rite) is Hari pleased? O highly intelligent Brāhmaṇa, explain this to me, your servant.

4. On being asked by the Vyādha (hunter) thus, the Brāhmaṇa spoke once again after bowing down to Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of the worlds, free from ailments.

Śaṅkha said:

5. Listen, O hunter, I shall describe the form of Viṣṇu. It is spotless (devoid of sins). It cannot be (adequately) comprehended by Brahmā and others and by sages of pure, sanctified souls.

6. The Lord of all has been described as one with full powers and one full of good qualities. The Lord whose form consists of existence,

knowledge and bliss, is devoid of attributes. It is devoid of *Kalās* (parts) and is infinite.

7. This entire universe consisting of mobile and immobile beings, has never been otherwise (i.e. this has continued to exist from the beginning). The Lord is the support of all the desires and hopes of this universe. The universe is always under the control of the Lord.

8-10. Now I shall tell the features of Brahman, the Supreme Soul, to you. He is called Viṣṇu; from him all these take place: origin, sustenance, annihilation, repetition, control, knowledge, bondage, salvation and livelihood. This Lord is termed Brahman too. He is honoured by the wise seers. They call him the veritable Brahman. Afterwards Brahmā and others too (were called so). The word 'Brahma' along with its attributes is interpreted as Brahmā (the creator) etc. by persons who know it.

11. No one else has the status of Brahma because they have only a part of his power. The birth etc. of this great Lord can be known only through scriptural texts.

12. O highly intelligent one, the scriptural texts are Vedas, Smṛtis, Purāṇas which have Vedas and Smṛtis for their soul, Itihāsas (epics, legends and mythology), Pāñcarātra and Bhārata.[1]

13. Mahāviṣṇu can be known only through these and not through anything else at all. No man who is not conversant with the Vedas thinks (can think) about Viṣṇu anywhere.

14. Neither through the sense-organs nor through inferences, nor through arguments, is it possible to know Lord Nārāyaṇa, the eternal lord who can be known only through the Vedas.

15. Individual souls that are always under his control, become liberated by knowing his good qualities, manifestatiohs and activities in accordance with their intellectual attainment.

16. The power of Viṣṇu is present in each of these: Devas, sages, Pitṛs and Mothers. It shall be comparatively more or less in each of these.

17. Through perception, verbal testimony and inference one should, at the outset, understand the Excellent Man in regard to strength, knowledge and happiness.

18. *Bhūta* (goblin?) is hundred times more than he. One should

1. These are the authoritative texts (*Pramāṇa-granthas*) for knowing Viṣṇu. The *Brahma Sūtra* is not mentioned as it was too tough for common people. '*Itihāsa*' and '*Bhārata*' are separately stated, perhaps to emphasize the special importance of the latter.

know that it is endowed with knowledge etc. One shall know that human beings and Gandharvas are hundred times superior to *Bhūta*.

19. One should know the Devas who identify themselves with the Tattvas as superior to them. The Seven Sages are more excellent than the Devas who identify themselves with the Tattvas.

20. Agni is more excellent than the Seven Sages. The Sun and others are superior to Agni. Guru is superior to the Sun. Prāṇa (Vital Air) is superior to Guru. Indra of great strength is superior to Prāṇa.

21. Goddess Girijā is superior to Indra. Śaṁbhu, the sire of the universe, is superior to the Goddess. Buddhi (Cosmic Intellect), the great goddess, is superior to (individual?) Buddhi and Prāṇa is superior in strength to Buddhi.

22. There is nothing greater than Prāṇa. Everything is established in Prāṇa. This universe is evolved out of Prāṇa. This universe has Prāṇa for its soul.

23. All this (visible world) is as if sewed to Prāṇa. It is active only through Prāṇa. They say that it is the support of everything and has the lustre of the blue cloud. It is the *Sūtra* (that which makes everything function).

24. This Prāṇa is sustained merely by the side-glance of Lakṣmī. That Lakṣmī gets a portion of the mercy of the Lord of Devas.

25-26. There is nothing greater than Viṣṇu nor even on a par with him in any respect.

The hunter asked:

How did this Prāṇa called *Sūtra* become superior to individual souls? How can this be decisively said? O holy lord, how is the superiority of Prāṇa? Explain this also, O Brāhmaṇa, how the Lord is greater than Prāṇa.

Śaṅkha said:

27. Listen, O hunter. I shall recount to you what you have asked about the decision in regard to the superiority of Prāṇa in all the Jīvas (Individual Souls).

28. Formerly in the Pādmakalpa, Nārāyaṇa, the eternal Lord, Janārdana, created Devas beginning with Brahmā and said thus:

29-32. "O prominent Devas, I shall instal god Brahmā as your protector and master of this empire (universe). You appoint that Deva as a crown-prince who is superior to you, who is richly endowed with

excellent moral character and possesses qualities of heroism, liberal-mindedness, etc."

On being told thus by the Lord, all Devas with Śakra as the leader, began to contend with one another: "I shall become so. I shall become so". All of them then began to argue. Some knew that the Sun-god was the greatest (god). Some said that Śakra (was the greatest) and some (said that) Kāma (was the greatest). Some kept quite. Unable to come to a decision, they went to Nārāyaṇa with a view to seek his decision.

33-34. After bowing down to him, all the immortal ones said with palms joined in reverence:

"O Mahāviṣṇu, all of us have pondered over the matter clearly. We do not know at all what Deva is superior to all the others among us. You alone proclaim your decision, as the Devas are indeed in doubt."

35-36. On being requested thus by all the immortal ones, the Lord laughingly said thus:

"This is the Vairāja body. When he goes out of it, it (the body) will fall. When it enters the body, it rises up. Hence this god is certainly superior to you all and none else at all."

37-38. On being told thus, all of them said, "So be it". At the outset, the leading Sura named Jayanta came out through the foot. Then they called it lame. The body did not fall. It continued to hear, drink, speak, smell and see though not (able) to walk.

39-43a. Then the patriarch named Dakṣa came out through the private part. Then they called it a eunuch. The body did not fall. It continued to hear, drink, speak, smell, see and move about.

Afterwards, Indra, the lord of all immortal ones, came out through the hand. They called it one devoid of hands. The body did not fall then. It continued to hear, drink, speak, smell, see and move about.

The Sun-god, the most excellent one among the refulgent bodies, came out through the eyes. Then, they called it "One-eyed"* (Blind?). The body did not fall. It continued to hear, drink, speak, smell and move but not see.

43b-44a. Afterwards Nāsatyas, the physicians of the universe, came out through the nostrils. They called it "One who did not smell". The body did not fall. It continued to hear, drink, speak and move about but not smell.

44b. The Quarters came out through the ears. Then the body did not

* '*Kāṇa*' should be interpreted as 'blind' here as 'one-eyed' man can see. He is not totally blind. But here 'complete blindness' is stated as a result of the absence of Sun-god.

fall. They called it "deaf" but not dead at all.

45. It continued to drink and speak but not hear or move about. Thereafter Varuṇa came out through the tongue. Then the body did not fall. They called it "One who cannot relish the taste."

46-47. It continued to be alive, move about, eat, understand and breathe.

Then Vahni, the lord and presiding deity of speech, came out through the organ of speech. Then they called it "dumb". But the body did not fall. It continued to be alive, move about, eat, understand and breathe.

48-49. Afterwards Rudra came out through the mind, Rudra of the nature of enlightener of the mind. Then they called it, Jaḍa (sluggish, dull). The body did not fall then. It continued to be alive, move about, eat, understand and breathe.

Afterwards Prāṇa (Vital Air) came out. Then they came to know him to be dead. The Devas who were surprised in their minds said thus:

50. "He who makes this body rise up, shall be the most excellent one among us. He will become the Crown Prince."

51-52. Afterwards they came to an agreement among themselves thus. They entered the body in due order.

Jayanta entered the feet. That body did not rise up. Dakṣa entered the private parts. That body did not rise up. Indra entered the hands. That body did not rise up.

53. The Sun entered the eye. That dead body did not rise up. The Quarters entered the ears. That body did not rise up.

54. Varuṇa entered the tongue. That body did not rise up. The divine physicians (Aśvin Devas) entered the nose. That body did not rise up.

55. Fire-god entered the organ of speech. That body did not rise up. Rudra entered the mind. That body did not get up.

56-57. Afterwards Prāṇa entered. Then that dead body rose up.

Thereupon the Devas came to the decision that Prāṇa, the lord, is the most excellent one among all the Devas in strength, knowledge, courage, absence of attachment and in living. They crowned it Yuvarāja (Heir-Apparent).

58-60. They recited an *Uktha* (Sāman hymn) as he was the cause of excellent maintenance. Hence the entire universe has Prāṇa for its soul. The entire universe consisting of mobile and immobile beings is complete with all parts and wholes endowed with strength. It (Prāṇa) is complete (Supreme) lord of the worlds.

There is nothing in the universe devoid of Prāṇa. It (thing devoid

of Prāṇa) has no existence. That which is devoid of Prāṇa does not flourish. There is no existence without Prāṇa. Nothing can subsist devoid of Prāṇa. Hence Prāṇa became superior to all Jīvas. It is more excellent in strength. It is the immanent soul of all Individual Souls.

61-62. Nothing superior to or on a par with Prāṇa has been seen or heard about before in the scriptural texts. Though Lord Prāṇa is one, it is diversified inasmuch as it follows the different effects. Hence they say that Prāṇa is the most excellent one. Those who are eager to worship Prāṇa say that Prāṇa is competent to create, sustain and annihilate the universe playfully.

63. Excepting Vāsudeva, no one is competent to assail or excel it, whether it be conscious like the serpent Śeṣa, Śiva, Śakra and others, or inert.

64. Prāṇa is identified with all the Devas. He is the soul of all the Devas. He is a perpetual follower of Vāsudeva. He is always under the control of Viṣṇu.

65-66. He neither hears nor sees anything opposed to Vāsudeva. The Devas, the leading Suras, including Rudra, Indra etc. do act in opposition to (Vāsudeva), but Prāṇa which is present in all, never opposes (Vāsudeva). Hence learned men say that Prāṇa is the strength of Viṣṇu.

67-71. After knowing thus the greatness and characteristics of Mahāviṣṇu, a devotee should cast off the subtle body like a serpent casting off the slough. The subtle body which follows the *Pūrvabandha* (*Avidyā*: Nescience)[1] is to be left off. He then attains Nārāyaṇa, free from illness.

On hearing the words uttered by Śaṅkha, the hunter became delighted in his mind. He bowed down with humility and asked that sage once again: "O Brāhmaṇa, the greatness of this magnanimous Prāṇa, the sire of the universe, is not known in the world. How is it that the greatness of Devas, sages, kings and other noble-souled ones is heard about in the world and in the Purāṇas thousands of times? Tell me this, O Brāhmaṇa. I am very eager to hear."

Śaṅkha said:

72. Formerly Prāṇa was desirous of performing horse-sacrifices in

1. *Pūrvabandhaḥ* is explained as follows: *Pūrva*—beginningless; *bandha*—bondage. It is the characteristic of *Avidyā*. This concept is similar to *Āṇava-mala* of Kāśmīra Śaivism. But here it is the *Liṅga-Śarīra* which is characterized by *Avidyā*.

order to propitiate Nārāyaṇa, Hari, free from ailments. So he joyously went to the banks of Gaṅgā.

73-74. He sanctified the ground by means of ploughs, surrounded by various groups of sages. There was a sage named Kaṇva, hidden within an anthill in the course of his transcendental meditation. He was dug up by means of these ploughs. Coming up, he spoke furiously. He cursed Prāṇa, the great lord, as he saw him standing in front:

75-76. "O Lord of Devas, from now onwards your greatness will not be known in the three worlds, especially in the terrestrial worlds. Your incarnations will, however, become very well-known in all the three worlds."

On being told thus by the sage, Wind-god (i.e. Prāṇa) spoke to him furiously:

77-78. "I have been cursed without any offence, though I am free from sin and I am competent to suffer adversities. Hence, O Kaṇva, you will become inimical to your preceptor at once." Wind-god said this also: "Be one of censurable conduct in the world." Ever since then the greatness of the great lord, Prāṇa, is not known in this world, particularly on the earth.

79-80. On account of the curse, Kaṇva[1] ate his preceptor and became a disciple of Sun-god.

Thus what has been asked by you has been entirely recounted. Whatever further has to be heard by you, O hunter, ask me. Do not hesitate.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Bhāgavata Dharmas

The hunter said:

1-2. Why were *Jīvas* (individual souls) created by the Lord in thousands and crores? They are seen engaged in different activities, diverse paths and pursuits. They are eternal. They are not of the same nature. Why is it so, O highly intelligent one? Describe everything in detail to me truthfully. I earnestly request for it.

1. The author seems to have confused Yājñavalkya with Kaṇva. It was Yājñavalkya who renounced his first teacher Vaiśaṁpāyana and became a disciple of the Sun-god and received from him the 'White' Yajurveda. Kaṇva on the contrary is a 'seer' of the 8th Maṇḍala of RV. Mbh also does not attribute such 'teacher-eating' to Kaṇva. Kaṇva's being excavated from an anthill is not traced elsewhere.

Śaṅkha said:

3-6. Indeed the groups of Jīvas are of three types with Rajas, Sattva and Tamas as their Guṇas.[1] Those of Rajas perform Rājasa activities. Those of Tamas pursue Tāmasa activities and those of Sattva pursue Sāttvika activities.

Sometimes there occurs difference in Guṇas during their transmigration (from one birth to another). For this reason they do acts of higher and lower kinds and experience the fruits thereof.

In some cases they obtain happiness, in some instances they experience miseries and in some cases they get both (happiness and miseries). These they attain on account of difference in their (share of) Guṇas. Being bound by the three Guṇas, these Jīvas abide in Prakṛti.

7. The diversity in regard to the fruits of actions occurs in accordance with Guṇas and Karmas. Again these individuals (i.e. individual souls) attain Prakṛti and conformity to the Guṇas.

8. (*Obscure*) Those who abide in Prakṛti and those who follow it are excited (*abhimūrchitāḥ*?) by Prakṛti and they attain Prakṛti as their goal. There is no question of opposition to Prakṛti.

9. The Tāmasas (those with dominant Tamoguṇa) mostly experience pain and misery. They have always Tāmasa pursuits and activities. They are merciless and cruel. They live in the world activated by hatred alone.

10-11. Beings beginning with Rākṣasas and ending with Piśācas attain the Tāmasa goal. Those with dominance of Rajas quality are of mixed temperament. They commit sins as well as meritorious deeds. They attain heaven as a result of meritorious deeds. They undergo sufferings in certain places due to sins. Hence these unfortunate ones repeatedly come and go (in this world).

12. Persons habituated to perform pious deeds, the merciful ones, those who are faithful and those who are devoid of jealousy are the Sāttvikas. They continue to follow the activities of Sattva type (of good nature).

13. Persons of great prowess and devoid of impurities, go upwards when the Guṇas are dispelled.

1. VV 3-17 discuss the theory of *Karmavāda*. *Jīvas* are characterized by their guṇas and they receive the fruits of the action according to their *Guṇa* and *Karma*. Hence God cannot be charged with partiality (*Vaiṣamya*) and ruthlessness (*Nairghṛṇya*). Lord Viṣṇu is *Pūrṇakāma* and treats all equally like a showering cloud or a flowing canal.

Thus different activities have different feelings and different modes.

14. Viṣṇu, the great Lord, makes them do acts in accordance with their inherent Guṇas and Karmas for the purpose of attaining his own form.

15. Since Viṣṇu is *Pūrṇakāma* ('one who has achieved all desires'), there is neither *Vaiṣamya* (inequality or partiality in the dispensation of fruit) nor *Nairghṛṇya* (ruthlessness) in him. He impartially performs the work of creation, sustenance and annihilation.

16-17. All of them obtain the fruits of their actions in accordance with their own Guṇa.

A cloud showers rain equally on all the trees planted in a garden; similarly the same canal supplies water to all the trees alike. Hence we cannot accuse the planter of the garden of partiality and ruthlessness in any manner whatsoever.

The hunter enquired:

18-19. When will the salvation of these persons who have completely experienced (the fruits of their Karmas) take effect, O sage? Will it be at the time of the creation or of the annihilation of the established order? Or does it occur at the juncture of creation and annihilation or during the steady state? Explain this in detail, O Brāhmaṇa, and describe to me the activities of the Lord.

Śaṅkha said:

20. A thousand sets of four Yugas make what is called a day of Brahmā. He has a night also of the same duration. The day and night together make one full day.

21. Fifteen such full days make a Pakṣa (fortnight). A month consists of two such Pakṣas. They call two months together as one Ṛtu (Season) and three such Ṛtus make one Ayana.

22. Two Ayanas make one Vatsara (year). If hundred such years pass by, it is known as one Kalpa of Brahmā.

23-24. According to the opinion of those conversant with the Vedas the duration of Pralaya is that much (like that of a *Brāhma Kalpa*).

Pralaya (Annihilation) is of three types:[1] (1) *Mānava* when a Manu's

1. VV 24-38 describe the three types of *Pralaya*. It should be noted that Daily (*Dainandina*) *Pralaya* occurs at the end of Brahmā's day and not of ours as is believed by some.

period becomes complete; (2) *Dainaṁdina* (Daily) i.e. occurring at the end of a day of Brahmā; (3) *Brāhma Pralaya* occurring when Brahmā passes away.

25-29. Manu's Pralaya is known to take place at the end of a Muhūrta of Brahmā. When fourteen such Pralayas take place in due order, they call it *Dainaṁdina Laya*.

Now (I shall recount) the situation during the Pralayas. After a Manvantara only three worlds are destroyed. (The other) worlds are not destroyed. Only the sentient beings perish. The space shall be filled with waters. After a Manvantara is over and when another Manvantara starts, the sentient beings will be born once again. During Dainaṁdina Laya, O hunter, everything perishes. When the Four-faced Lord is asleep, all the worlds except Satyaloka perish along with their presiding deities. The sentient beings along with the elements face dissolution. All the inanimate beings too perish.

30-33. The presiding deities of the Elements and some sages are left out. All those established in Satyaloka remain asleep. They continue to sleep till the end of the Kalpa. They are beyond the pale of sense-organs. Again, at the end of the night, Brahmā creates everything as before. He creates the sages, the Devas, the Pitṛs, the worlds, the Dharmas and the different castes separately. Again the ten incarnations of the discus-bearing Lord Viṣṇu take place. All these are created invariably. The Devas and the sages live till the end of the Kalpa of the Lord of Sarasvatī (Brahmā).

34-39a. They are born again and they attain salvation along with Brahmā. Pious persons and honourable kings, those persons who had attained Siddhi, those who had reached the supreme stage and those who are established in Satyaloka, move about along with him. Those who belong to that group, go again and are born in the different Gotras with their respective names. They adhere to the Śrutis. They are always engaged in their different actions. In regard to all the Daityas (their salvation occurs) when Kali Yuga comes to a close.

Those who have hell as their abode, attain their goal along with Kali. Those who are established in their group and others with their names (?) are reborn according to their Karma and then perform their respective duties.

I shall now tell the time of creation and the time of salvation of the Devas including Brahmā. Listen with an attentive mind.[1]

1. VV 39b-50 describe the process of creation of the world and also the exposition of the functions of four Vyūhas.

39b-44a. One Wink of the Lord of Devas is considered to be equal to a Kalpa of Brahmā. At the end thereof occurs opening of the eyes of the Lord, the crest-jewel of Devas. At the end of the Wink, he will have the desire to create the worlds existing in his belly. He then glances at all those many groups of Jīvas within his belly, those Jīvas that are worthy of being created, those that are liberated and all those who have met with *Liṅgabhaṅga* (the break-up of the subtle body—*Liṅgaśarīra*?)

Those who are asleep, all those who are on the path (*sṛtisthāḥ*?) all those engulfed in darkness, those who had met with the break-up of the subtle body in the previous Kalpa beginning with Brahmā and ending with Manus, the individual souls, the living-liberated ones, those that have attained liberation, those that were liberated in the previous Kalpa beginning with Brahmā and ending with Manus stay within the belly of Viṣṇu, still absorbed in meditation.

44b-50. During the earlier part of the period of 'opening of the eyes', the Lord assumes the four-fold manifestation (Vyūhas). On the basis of the previous accumulation of good qualities, he grants the *Sāyujya* type of salvation to Brahmā through a Vāsudeva, a manifestation of the Vyūha (*obscure*).

Thereafter he grants *Sāyujya* to the noble-souled ones conversant with reality. Then the Lord grants *Sārūpya* to some, *Sāmīpya* to others and *Sālokya* to still others. Thereafter Lord Janārdana espied all the worlds that had been under the control of (the manifestation called) Aniruddha. Handing them over to Pradyumna, he became inclined towards creation. Through the fourfold set of forms with the full complement of good qualities, Hari, beginning with Vāsudeva himself married Māyā, Jāyākṛti and Śānti respectively. In collaboration with them, the Lord of the nature of the four-fold manifestation produced the world of diversified actions and temperament, though he himself is Pūrṇakāma ('one who has realized all the desires'). At the end of *Unmeṣa* ('opening of the eyes'), Viṣṇu once again resorted to Yogamāyā.

51-52a. Through Saṅkarṣaṇa who is a manifestation in the Vyūha, he destroys this (universe) consisting of mobile and immobile beings. Thus every activity of the Great Ātman that could be thought of, has been recounted. What cannot be thought of is very difficult to be imagined or conceived even by Yogins including Brahmā.

The hunter said:

52b-53a. What are the Bhāgavata (pertaining to the Lord) rites?

What are those whereby Viṣṇu becomes pleased? I wish to hear about them now. O sage, describe them to me.

Śaṅkha said:

53b-55. Know that to be a Sāttvika Dharma[1] whereby there shall be purity of mind, which shall be helpful to good people and which is not at all censured by anyone.

They know that Dharma to be Sāttvika, the Dharma which is laid down in Śrutis and Smṛtis, provided it is not attended with ardent desires (for worldly pleasures) and is not antagonistic to worldly pursuits.

Those Dharmas are of four types according to the castes and the stages of life.

56-59. They are classified into three other groups, viz. *Nityas* (daily duties such as Sandhyā prayers etc.), *Naimittikas* (occasioned by astronomical positions and other causes) and *Kāmyas* (performed for the attainment of specific ends).

All those different duties (of the different castes) should be known as Sāttvika Dharmas when they are dedicated to Viṣṇu. They are the auspicious Bhāgavata Dharmas.

The holy rites with other presiding deities are considered to be Rājasas (of the Rājasa type).

The wicked and atrocious rites with Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Piśācas etc. as the presiding deities, which are censured (by good people) and which involve violence and injury (to others) are known as Tāmasas (having Tamoguṇa as the basis).

Those are known as Bhāgavatas who strictly adhere to Sattva Guṇa and perform the auspicious Sāttvika Dharmas that cause delight unto Viṣṇu and who perform them regularly without any specific desire.

60. Those are indeed Bhāgavatas whose mind is always attached to Viṣṇu, in whose tongue the name of the Lord is present and in whose heart the feet of the Lord are enshrined.

61. Those who are engaged in good conduct, those who render help to all and those who are always free from *Mamatā* (sense of "myness", self-interest) are known as Bhāgavatas.

62. Those who have full faith in the scriptural texts, their precep-

1. VV 53-92 define and describe Sāttvika Dharmas, who are Bhāgavatas and allied topics. The Vaiśākha Dharmas included here too, are stated in a nutshell (vv 71-92).

tor, pious and honourable men and good activities, and those who are always devoted to Viṣṇu are known as Bhāgavatas.

63. The Dharmas esteemed by Bhāgavatas, those that are ever dear to Viṣṇu, and which are laid down in Śrutis and Smṛtis are considered eternal.

64-68. In regard to those people whose mind is attracted by sensual pleasures, wandering over all the lands, seeing (performance) of all holy rites and listening to all Dharmas does not serve any purpose like an excellent young women in regard to a eunuch.

Merely by looking at pious and honourable men the mind of good people begins to melt like a slab of the moon-stone (*Candrakāntaśilā*) that comes into contact with the rays of the Moon.

In some places, by listening to excellent scriptural texts, the mind of good men being unaffected by sensual pleasures remains pure and refulgent like a sun-stone (*Sūryakāntaśilā*) due to contact with the rays of the Sun.

A Dharma always liked by Viṣṇu and faithfully resorted to by the people devoid of desires is considered to be a Bhāgavata Dharma.

69. Many holy rites observed by them yield benefit here and hereafter. They give delight to Viṣṇu. They are subtle and conducive to liberation from all miseries.

70. Just as one takes out the essence, butter, from curds, so also the Lord, residing in the Milk Ocean, has taken out the Dharma pertaining to Vaiśākha and recounted it to Ramā with a desire for the welfare of all.

71-75. The following are the holy rites destructive of sins: Making cool shady places along the roads, endowing free-water booths for distributing drinking water, fanning with hand fans, offering of utensils and furniture, gift of umbrella and shoes, gift of camphor and sweet scents, digging of tanks, wells and lakes if one has the money and other facilities, gift of sweet drinks in the evening, gift of flowers, gift of betel leaves and that of milk products are particularly destructive of sins. Gift of butter-milk with a pinch of salt to one who is weary on the way, applying oil to the body, washing of the feet of Brāhmaṇas, gift of mats, blankets and cots, gift of cows and of gingelly seeds mixed with honey are destructive of sins.

76-78. Giving sugarcane stumps in the evening, gift of sweet concoction from cucumber and medicine and offerings to manes: these are the holy activities particularly mentioned for this month which is a favourite month of Mādhava.

A devotee should take his holy bath early in the morning at sunrise. He should listen to the chanting (of the Vedic Mantras) done by Brāhmaṇas. He should then perform his daily round of duties and then worship Madhusūdana. With great concentration he should listen to the story pertaining to the month of Vaiśākha.

79-85. The devotee should avoid applying oil to the body; he should not take meal in a bell-metal vessel; he should not take forbidden food. He should not indulge in idle talk and gossip. He should abstain from eating bottle-gourd, garlic, carrot, gingelly seed-cake or eatables prepared from gingelly powder, gruel made by fermentation of boiled rice, burnt rice, Ghṛtakośātakī, Upodakī, Kaliṅga, Śiśuśāka, pterygosperma, potherb, Dolichos lablab, horsegram, Masūra pulse, eggplants, Wrightia antidysenteria, the grain eaten by poor people viz. Paspalum scrobiculatum, Amaranthus polygonoides, safflower prepared as potherb, radish, Ficus religiosa, Aegle marmelos, and Cordia latifolia. A wise devotee should avoid all these in this month much liked by Mādhava.

By eating any of these he shall definitely be reborn as a Cāṇḍāla and then in hundreds of animal wombs (species). There is no doubt about it. Thus the devotee should perform the Vrata for the whole month for propitiating the Slayer of Madhu. When the Vrata is concluded, the devotee should make an image of the Lord.

86. The image of Lord Madhusūdana should be given to a Brāhmaṇa along with clothes, monetary gifts etc. after duly being worshipped with all necessary offerings.

87-88a. On the twelfth day in the bright half of Vaiśākha the devotee should eagerly give curd-rice (boiled rice mixed with curds) along with a pot full of water, fruits, betel leaves and monetary gifts (saying) "I give this unto Dharmarāja. May Yama be pleased with it."

88b-91. It should be given with the sacred thread worn over the right shoulder after uttering the name and Gotra of the fathers and manes. Thus the devotee should give rice mixed with curds for the sake of the pleasure of the manes. Similarly he should give to the preceptors too and afterwards to Viṣṇu.

"I give unto you, O Viṣnu, excellent cool water and rice mixed with curds. It is kept in a bell-metal vessel. It is offered along with betel leaves and monetary gifts, edible foodstuffs and fruits. I wish to go unto the world of Viṣṇu."

After offering this he should give a cow in accordance with his capacity, to a person having a large family.

92-95. If a person performs this monthly *Vrata* with sincerity, he

shall be rid of all his sins. He shall redeem a hundred generations of his family. Even as all living beings keep in looking at him, he shall pass beyond the sphere of the Sun and go to the highest abode of Viṣṇu inaccessible even to Yogins.

When the excellent Brāhmaṇa went on explaining thus the holy rites pertaining to Vaiśākha, recounted by Viṣṇu, asked by the hunter and (considered) exceedingly good, a banyan tree with five big branches fell down even as all of them were looking on. From that tree a very long cruel serpent that was hidden in a hollow left aside his body and sinful birth. He stood there with palms joined in reverence and with his head bowed down.

CHAPTER TWENTYONE

Birth of Vālmīki

Śrutadeva said:

1-3. Along with the hunter Śaṅkha became surprised. He asked him, "Who may you be? Whence have you been in this plight? O gentle Sir, what is that holy rite whereby your mind has become auspiciously inclined? How did you get liberated so suddenly? Tell this in detail."

On being asked thus by Śaṅkha, he fell on the ground like a staff; with palms joined in reverence and bowing down his head with humility, he spoke these words:

4-6. (The redeemed serpent said[1]:) "Formerly I was a very talkative Brāhmaṇa in Prayāga. I was endowed with handsome features and prime of youth. I was very proud on account of my learning. I had abundant wealth and many sons. I had the defect of always behaving arrogantly. I was the son of Sage Kusīda, Rocana by name. These were my activities: Sitting quietly, lying down, sleeping, having sexual intercourse, gambling, gossiping and usury.

7. Being apprehensive of public censure, I used to perform hypocritically even the subtlest of traditional (religious) rites. But I never had any faith in them.

1. The story of redemption of Rocana from the serpent-species by simply hearing the Vaiśākha Vratas is meant for the glorification of the Vaiśākha Vratas.

8-12. I, who was thus wicked and of perverted mind, passed a great deal of time. Once in the month of Vaiśākha, a Brāhmaṇa named Jayanta, expounded the holy rites enjoined for that month dear to the Lord.

Men and women among the meritorious Brāhmaṇas residing in that holy place, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and thousands of Śūdras took bath early in the morning and worshipped the immutable Lord Madhusūdana. Thereafter, they used to listen to the story recounted by Jayanta. All of them were pure (in body and mind). They observed silence. They were interested in stories of Vāsudeva. They were devoutly engaged in the holy rites of Vaiśākha. They were devoid of hypocrisy and laziness. I entered that assembly out of curiosity and with a desire to see (what was going on there).

13-16. Wearing a turban, I did not bow down my head. I had betel-leaves still in my mouth. I did not take away the shirt that had been worn by me. Taking interest in gossip and rumour, I disturbed the (atmosphere of the) holy story. The mind of everyone became unsteady (and distracted) on account of the gossip.

Some time I stretched the clothes; some time I censured the people. I laughed loudly on some occasion. Thus the time was spent by me till the conclusion (of the discourse). Afterwards due to the same fault, I had a loss of memory immediately. I became short-lived. On the next day, I died as a result of the combined derangement of all the humours.

17-21. I fell into the hell Halāhala filled with molten lead and experienced the tortures therein for fourteen Manvantaras.

I was born in succession in all the eight million four hundred thousand species of living beings. Now I lived on this tree a hundred Yojanas high and ten Yojanas in girth. I lived here in a hollow seven Yojanas long, as a cruel serpent of Tāmasa nature. Oppressed by that early (sinful and indecent) action (of mine), I have been staying here in the form of a serpent thus. Ten thousand years have elapsed since I began to live in this hollow without getting any food. Fortunately, I heard through my pair of eyes (which happened to be my ears too) the nectar-like story that issued from your lotus-like mouth. Hence, O sage, all my inauspiciousness has been destroyed.

22. I have discarded my form of a serpent and have become a person of divine form. With palms joined in reverence I bow down to you. I take refuge in your feet.

23-26. In which birth you were my kinsman, I do not know, O excellent sage. No one has been helped by me (so far). How could I be sympathetic to good people?

Honourable and pious men are of impartial mind. They are always compassionate towards all living beings. They are by nature ready to help others. Their mind is not otherwise. Bless me now, so that my mind will be inclined towards Dharma. One should never forget Viṣṇu, the Discus-bearing Lord. Let there be constant association with great men of saintly conduct. Let there be poverty alone, to act as the greatest collyrium (to dispel) the blindness due to arrogance."

27-29. Thus he eulogized him in various ways and bowed down to him again and again. With palms joined in reverence, he made obeisance to him and stood in front of him silently. Śaṅkha was completely overwhelmed with love. He lifted him up with both the hands and stroked his limbs with his highly auspicious hand, without any undue excitement. He blessed the Brāhmaṇa in divine form. With great kindness he spoke to him immediately, about the future events:

30. "O Brāhmaṇa, all your bondage has been destroyed immediately after listening to the greatness of the month as well as to that of Hari.

31. After wiping out the stigma, you will go back to the earth once again and be born again as an excellent Brāhmaṇa in the meritorious land of Daśārṇa.

32. You will be famous by the name Vedaśarmā. You will be an expert in all the Vedas. There you will have perfect and auspicious recollection of the previous births.

33. With the recollection of unbroken sequence (of events), you will become splendid. You will eschew all sorts of attachments to the mundane pleasures. You will perform all the holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha which is so dear to Hari.

34. In that birth you will be free from the *Dvandvas* (mutually opposed pairs), devoid of desire, devoted to the preceptors, unattached to sensuous feelings and with all the sense-organs perfectly under control. You will be talking about the stories of Viṣṇu constantly.

35. Then you will attain Siddhi with all the bondages cut asunder. You will go to the greatest abode inaccessible even through Yogic practices.

36-38. Do not be afraid, dear son; with my favour you will secure welfare. If anyone utters at least once the sin-dispelling name of Viṣṇu for the sake of fun or out of fear, anger or hatred, with love, affection or great desire, even the greatest of sinners goes to the abode of Viṣṇu devoid of ailments. Then those who are endowed with faith and compassion, those who have subdued anger and the sense-organs will still

certainly go there on hearing the story (of the Lord).

39. Even if they are devoid of all Dharmas, some attain the greatest region of Viṣṇu through devotion alone if they are engaged in talking about (or listening to) the story (of the Lord).

40. With a (feigned) devotion prompted by hatred etc., some attend upon and serve Viṣṇu. They too go to the greatest region like Pūtanā who destroyed (various) lives.

41. One should be constantly associated with great men and exchange words with them. It is an injunction laid down in the Vedas that this must be followed by those who are desirous of salvation.

42. This exchange of words causes destruction of the sins of common people. In the course of the utterance of the names of the infinite Lord during these exchanges of words, mistakes may happen in every verse. Still honourable and pious people hear, sing about and praise the names of the Lord associated with his fame.

43. (*Defective Text*) The Lord does not wish to give (his devotees) strain in the course of their service to himself; nor does he want them to waste their beauty and youth (?). On being remembered but once, he grants them his refulgent abode. Who will not seek refuge in one who is (so) merciful?

44. Seek refuge in the self-same Nārāyaṇa who is free from blames and defects, who is fond of his devotees, who (though) unmanifest can be realized through the mind and who is a storehouse of mercy.

45. Perform all these holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha, O highly intelligent one. Delighted on account of it, the Lord of the universe will confer welfare upon you."

46. After saying this, the sage stopped. The man in divine form glanced at the hunter with great surprise and spoke once again to the eminent sage:

The Divine Person said:

47-48. I am contented. I am blessed by you, the compassionate one, O Śaṅkha. Fortunately my evil birth has ceased to be. I have attained the greatest goal.

After saying this he circumambulated the sage. On being permitted by him, he went to heaven.

Then the evening set in. O king, Śaṅkha was duly propitiated by the hunter.

49-54. He performed the evening Sandhyā rites and passed the re-

maining part of the night recounting the anecdotes of various kings, Devas and (other) noble-souled ones, as well as the Lord's graceful sports and discourses in the course of his (the Lord's) incarnations.

(On the next day) he got up in the Brāhma Muhūrta (i.e. before dawn), washed his feet and silently meditated on Brahman that redeems everyone from worldly turmoil. He then performed all his daily round of excellent duties beginning with bodily cleanliness. When in Vaiśākha, the Sun was in Aries, he look his bath before sunrise. He performed Sandhyā prayers and other holy rites and offered libations to all (the Pitṛs). Thereafter, with great delight in his mind he called the hunter and sprinkled the holy water on his head. Then he imparted to him the two-syllabled name *Rāma* which is more splendid than and superior to the Devas. (Then he said:)

"Everyone of the names of Viṣṇu is considered to be superior to all the Vedas. Of all the innumerable names, the thousand names called *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* are very superior. The name *Rāma* is on a par with those thousand names.

55-59. Hence, O hunter, repeat that name *Rāma* continuously. Perform all these holy rites till death, O hunter. Thereby you will be reborn in the family of sage Valmīka. You will attain fame on the earth by the name Vāmīki."[1]

Having instructed the hunter thus, he started towards the southern quarter. The hunter circumambulated him and bowed to him repeatedly. After following him for a short distance he halted there looking after him till he went out of (the range of) his sight. With pangs of separation, he began to cry. He returned with great difficulty, thinking about him alone in his heart.

He planted some trees and made a park on the way. A free-water booth was constructed free from all impurities. Then he performed all those very excellent holy rites laid down for the month of Vaiśākha.

1. Our text gives a different version of the birth of Vālmīki. According to the current version, a Vyādha, robber of forest travellers, repents for his evil deeds when asked by Nārada to enquire if the members of his family would share his sins and met with their refusal to do so. The Vyādha requests Nārada to redeem him. Nārada gave him '*Rāma*' *mantra*. The Vyādha was so engrossed in meditation on Rāma that an anthill grew around him. Hence he became known as Vālmīki (*Valmīka:* an anthill). He became famous as the author of Rāmāyaṇa. Our text makes the Vyādha to take birth from sage Valmīka, an epithet of sage Kṛṇu whose body was covered with an anthill. The son of Kṛṇu alias Valmīka became known as Vālmīki, the famous author of Rāmāyaṇa. The credit of all this is given to the efficacy of Vaiśākha Vratas (v 69).

60-63. With the fruits of wild wood-apples, jack-fruit, rose-apples and mangoes, he provided food for wayfarers who were overcome with fatigue. He removed the fatigue of the perspiring pedestrians by means of umbrellas and fans, footwears and sandalpastes and cool shady places here and there spread with fine sand particles. He took his bath early in the morning and repeated the "*Rāma*" Mantra day and night. The hunter was reborn as the son of Valmīka.

64-68. There was a certain sage named Kṛṇu. He performed a very severe penance on the banks of that lake without any external movement. As great deal of time elapsed, an anthill covered his body. So they began to call him Valmīka when he ceased to perform the penance. When Kṛṇu began to recollect worldly affairs, the sage began to think about women, O king. Then he had a seminal discharge. A female dancer grasped it and the hunter was reborn of her. He became well-known in all the worlds as Vālmīki. It was he who made the story of Rāma popular in the world by means of his charming verses. The divine story of Rāma that dispelled the bondage of Karmas was thus popularized by him through his composition.

69. See, O king, the greatness of Vaiśākha that yields prosperity even today. Even a hunter attained the rare status of a sage by making the gift of footwears.

70. He who listens to or recounts this great narrative that makes hair stand on end (as a Sāttvika Bhāva) and that dispels sins shall not suck the breasts any more (i.e. will attain liberation).

CHAPTER TWENTYTWO

Liberation of Pitṛs

Maithileya asked:

1-6a. What are the meritorious lunar days in the month of Vaiśākha? What are the different charitable gifts recommended particularly in those Tithis? What are those Tithis which are very popular in the world? Speak out in detail.

Śrutadeva said:

(All) the thirty Tithis are meritorious in Vaiśākha when the Sun is in Aries.

What is performed on the Ekādaśī (Eleventh) day is highly meritorious. It shall be crores and crores of times efficacious. He who takes a plunge in the water on the eleventh day attains the merit which is obtained by means of all charitable gifts and that benefit which is obtained in all the Tīrthas. Holy bath, charitable gift, penance, Homa, worship of the Deity, good holy rites and listening to the story: all these bring about salvation instantaneously. One who is afflicted with sickness etc., and assailed by poverty shall become contented and blessed by listening to this meritorious story.

6b-10. One who spends these auspicious days without taking bath and without charitable gifts is proclaimed as a big (sinner on a par with) a slayer of cows and parents or as an ungrateful fellow. Water reservoirs are within our reach. Our body is under our own control.

Mādhava is to be served mentally; the time is very excellent with very good qualities; and pious men are full of mercy. Who then does not serve Mādhava (the Lord, the month of Vaiśākha)?

Holy rites in Vaiśākha can be performed with the greatest ease by the poor, the rich, lame ones, blind ones, eunuchs, widows, men, women, teen-aged ones, youths, old people and those who are laid up with sickness.

11-15. At the advent of this month, perform all these auspicious rites. Who will not endeavour for this? Who is more auspicious than that man? One who does not perform these easy rites is a base man. There is no doubt about this that hells are easily within his reach.

Now I shall mention the *Tithi* that is the most excellent one in that month that dispels all sins. I shall mention the essence like butter that is taken from curds.

In the highly meritorious month of Caitra (?) when the Sun is in Aries, that Tithi has the Manes for its deity (new-moon day?). It is destructive of sins. It yields the benefit of crores of Gayās. In this connection an ancient story about Pitṛs is heard. Listen, O king, to that good story (which happened) when Sāvarṇi was ruling the earth.

16. At the end of the thirtieth Kaliyuga which is devoid of all Dharmas, there was a certain Brāhmaṇa well-known as Dharmavarṇa in the land of Ānarta.

17-18. The sage had already observed in the first quarter of that same Kaliyuga, O king, that the people were engrossed in sins. At that time of Kaliyuga which was devoid of Dharmas fixed for different castes, once he went to the holy place of Puṣkara where the noble-souled sages were engaged in a Sattra (sacrifice of a long duration)

along with the observance of the vow of silence.

19. The sages held a discourse on scriptural topics. Some of them who were habituated to the performance of holy rites praised Kaliyuga.

20. The merit of propitiating Mādhava which could be accomplished in the course of one year in Kṛtayuga could be accomplished in a month in Tretāyuga, O king, and the same in a fortnight in Dvāparayuga.

21. Ten times that merit can be achieved through the remembrance of Viṣṇu in Kaliyuga. Even the least bit of meritorious deed in Kaliyuga will have crores of times the benefit.

22-24. In Kaliyuga which is devoid of mercy and meritorious deeds, which is bereft of charitable gifts and other holy rites, he who shows mercy and makes any gift after uttering the name of Hari but once, shall go up (to higher regions) certainly. So also the person who gives food during a famine.

While this topic was being discussed thus, Sage Nārada came there. He caught hold of his own penis with one hand and the tongue with the other and began to laugh like a madmen. The excellent sage began to dance too.

25-30. Those who were in the assembly asked him, "O Nārada, what is this?"

That highly intelligent sage replied to them all while continuing to dance and laugh: "On account of pleasure. Since it has been mentioned by you who have sanctified your own souls and who are dancing (?) There is no doubt about it. We are all (persons who have) realized souls. The meritorious Kali has arrived. It is true. There is no doubt about it that much is achieved through very little. Merely by remembering Keśava, the destroyer of pain, we can make him delighted.

Still I will have to tell you that two things cannot be accomplished definitely, dear sons, viz. curb on the penis (sex instinct) and check on the tongue permanently. If both of them are under the control of anyone, he shall become Janārdana. Hence, at the time of the advent of Kaliyuga, you all must not stay here. Leave off this heretic Bhārata[1] and go anywhere else as you please, to any of the lands where your mind feels delighted."

31. On hearing these words of his, the honourable sages of holy rites concluded the Sattra and went away as they pleased.

32-36. On hearing them, Dharmavarṇa too felt inclined to abandon

1. The strange belief is that the influence of Yuga-System is limited to Bhārata.

the country. He observed the holy rite conducive to increasing refulgence in order to survey the misdeeds in the Kali Age. He took up his staff and waterpot and proceeded wearing bark garments and matted hair.

With his mind struck with wonder, he saw cruel people and atrocious rogues indulging in the commission of sinful deeds.[1] All the Brāhmaṇas were heretic and the Śūdras became recluses. Wife hated husband and disciple hated preceptor. Servant became the murderer of master and son was engaged in slaying father. All Brāhmaṇas mostly resembled Śūdras; all cows resembled goats; the Vedas became folklore and auspicious holy rites (prescribed in Vedas etc.) became degraded like ordinary everyday activities.

37. Evil spirits, ghosts and vampires became deities bestowing benefits. Cruel people engaged in sinful activities worshipped them alone sincerely.

38 All the people were eagerly engaged in sexual intercourse, willing to abandon even their lives for that purpose. They committed perjury. They were all deceitful in their minds.

39. In Kali Age, there was always one thing in the mind, another in the utterance and still another in their action. To everyone *Vidyā* (higher learning) became only a means for achieving some selfish interest. That became worthy of adoration even in royal palaces.

40. In Kali Age, the fine arts including music and allied arts came to be liked and specially patronized by kings. The lowly and the vulgar ones became greatly esteemed and not the excellent ones.

41. In Kali Yuga, all the Brāhmaṇas well-versed in the Vedas would become poverty-stricken. Devotion to Viṣṇu generally becomes conspicuous by its absence.

42. Every holy spot generally became prominent resort of heretics. Śūdras became expounders of Dharmas. They became ascetics with matted hair in Kali Age.

43. All men were short-lived. All the people became ruthless rogues. All professed to be expounders of Dharma and all felt festive gaiety in pilfering and plundering.

44-45. People wish that they should be worshipped by others. They are engaged in futile accusations and censures of others. If the lord and master were to visit one's house, others became jealous of it.

In Kali Age a brother may carnally approach his sister and a father,

1. For the gruesome picture of the Kali age compare Mbh., *Śānti* 69.80-97; BdP I.ii.29.5-21; BhP XII.1-2; VP VI.1.

his own daughter. All people became enamoured of Śūdra women; all were fascinated by the charms of harlots.

46. People ignored good and honourable men. They hououred those having committed many sins. Foolishly stubborn persons eagerly pointed out even a single defect of good men.

47. Defects and blemishes of sinners are spoken of as good qualities. In Kali (Age) all the people devoid of good qualities, take only defects into account.

48-51. People were endowed with the characteristic quality of the leech which drinks only blood and not milk, not even water. Medicines become devoid of (their) potency; the seasons have undergone reverse changes.

There is famine in all the kingdoms. No woman delivered children at the right time. In Kali Age, men take great pleasure and interest in the arts of actors and dancers.

Foolish and stupid persons looked upon honourable men as their servants—those men who were superior in qualities and were engaged in the study of Vedas and Vedāntas.

People had abandoned Śrāddha rites. All the people left off the holy rites laid down in the Vedas. The names of Viṣṇu never occur on their tongues. The romantic sentiment of love gave them great bliss. They sang songs of erotic nature.

52. There was no service to Viṣṇu; no discussion of scriptural topics. There was no initiation for the purpose of sacrifices. There was not even the least consideration. No pilgrimage was undertaken; no charitable gifts were given; and no holy rites were performed by people during Kali Age. It was something surprising.

53. On seeing those things, Dharmavarṇa became exceedingly surprised and very much frightened. On seeing the whole race heading towards destruction, he went to another continent.

54-56. After wandering over all the continents and worlds that intelligent (Brāhmaṇa) went once to the world of Pitṛs out of curiosity. There he saw his own Manes and ancestors in a terrible plight. Due to their Karmas, they were exhausted and weary. They ran about here and there. They cried and lamented. Some of them had fallen into a blinding dark well. Some were about to fall therein.[1]

1. The birth of a son for the continuity of the family was looked upon as essential for providing food and water to the departed forefathers (vv 77-83). This figurative description of manes about to fall in abysmal depth is found in Mbh and other Purāṇas.

57-60. They were miserably suspended at the tip of a Dūrvā grass. They were suspicious and afraid of its snapping and giving way at any moment. Then there came a mouse to the very root of the Dūrvā grass. Three-fourths of the root were already gnawed and only one part remained. On seeing the root gradually wearing off, they were miserable with agony.

When they looked down, they saw the blinding dark well exceedingly terrible because of the impending fall of the embankment. It was very difficult to be surmounted. It was exceedingly terrible. It was brought about by their own Karmas. They were (therefore) extremely miserable. The space ahead too was unsurmountable and devoid of any support.

On seeing them the compassionate Brāhmaṇa was wonder-struck and he spoke these words:

61-66. "Who may you be? What is that insurmountable Karma whereby you have fallen into this? In whose Gotra were you born? How will you get a sure liberation? Tell this and it will be conducive to your welfare." On being told thus, those Manes became exceedingly miserable on account of those words. They spoke to him in pitiable tone and words, they who kept Dharma and Śrutis ahead (of everything else).

The Manes said:

We belong to Śrīvatsa Gotra. We are (almost) devoid of progeny on the earth. We are denied the Piṇḍas (rice-ball offerings) and Śrāddha rites. Therefore, we are scorched and agonized. It was on account of the sins that our race became issueless in this Kaliyuga. As the race has become extinct, there is no one to give us the Piṇḍas. Therefore, we, the wretched ones, devoid of progeny, are about to fall into the blinding dark well. There is only one in our race, Dharmavarṇa of great reputation. But he is unattached to worldly affairs. He is single (unmarried). He has not adopted the life of a householder.

67. Thanks to this (single) progeny, we somehow hold on, being supported by the single blade of Dūrvā grass. Since (he) has no progeny the mouse gnaws at its root everyday.

68. Since only one is remaining a bit of the blade of grass is left. O gentle Sir, look (how) it is being gnawed by the mouse.

69. At the end of his life, O dear one, the mouse will take away the rest of the grass too. Thereafter we should fall into the blinding darkness of the well that cannot be surmounted.

70. Hence go to the earth and enlighten Dharmavarṇa, the sage who is averse to a householder's life, through our words, as we are worthy of his compassion:

71-75. "Your ancestors are extremely agonized. They have fallen into hell. They were seen by me suspended by a Dūrvā blade and about to fall into the insurmountable blinding darkness of the abysmal well. That Dūrvā is symbolic of this family. O sage, the mouse is Time and it gnaws at its root everyday.

The family is gradually heading towards destruction. You alone are left. Hence, O sage, although three-fourths of the Dūrvā grass have perished, one part still remains, since you are present on the earth. As your life wanes away, the mouse goes on eating bit by bit. When you ultimately die, you and we will fall together in the deep well of blinding darkness as (the family) will be bereft of all progeny.

76. Hence adopt the life of a householder and raise a family. Thereby you and we shall undoubtedly have the uplift.

77-82. Many sons are to be sought after so that at least one of them may go to Gayā, or perform a horse-sacrifice or ritualistically discharge a dark-coloured bull.

Even if one of them performs on our behalf, holy bath, Śrāddha or charitable gifts in the month of Vaiśākha, Māgha or Kārttika, we shall be lifted up and be redeemed from hell. One of them will be a devotee of Viṣṇu. One of them may observe (fast etc.) on the day of Hari (i.e. on the eleventh lunar day). Or one of them may listen to the sin-destroying story of Viṣṇu. Thereby a hundred generations preceding him and a hundred generations following him will never see hell even if they are surrounded by sins.

Of what avail are many other sons devoid of compassion and holy rites, who, though born in the family, do not certainly worship Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa?

All people know that a man devoid of a son does not attain good world. There too, that progeny which is endowed with mercifulness is very rare."

83-88. Enlighten him through these kind and sincere words. Though he is unattached to worldly affairs, make him inclined towards the life of a householder.

On hearing these words of the ancestors, Dharmavarṇa was exceedingly surprised and bewildered. He bowed down to them. He cried; he had a shivering sensation. With palms joined in reverence, he said: "I

am a member of your family, Dharmavarṇa by name. I have been pertinacious. At the sacrificial chamber I heard the words of Nārada, the noble-souled (sage), that no one has control over the tongue or the organ of generation in Kaliyuga. On the earth, I saw those sinful people too. I became frightened and suspicious. Afraid of association with wicked people, I wandered over the world and stayed in other continents. Three quarters of Kaliyuga have passed off. Even in the last quarter, O Pitṛs, three and a half parts have passed off.

89-96. I am (was) not aware of your misery. My life has gone in vain. I did not pay off my debts to the Pitṛs of the family where I was born. Of what avail is that son born to one, if that son is a burden unto the earth and an enemy unto one, if that son does not worship Viṣṇu, Pitṛs, Devas and sages? I shall carry out your behest. Command me so that there is no danger (evil influence) of Kali and there is no trouble due to worldly existence. Command me as to my duties in the world as a son."

On being told thus by the intelligent Dharmavarṇa who belonged to their own family, (the Pitṛs) became pacified to a little extent in their minds, O king, and they said thus:

"O son, see this plight of your noble-souled Pitṛs. They are about to fall due to the absence of progeny. They have the support of only the Dūrvā blade. You do adopt the life of a householder and redeem us by means of progeny. Those who are attached to the stories of Viṣṇu, those who remember Hari always, those who are engaged in good conduct, are not harassed by Kali. Kali does not afflict that person in whose house there is a Śāligrāma stone, O bestower of honour, or in whose house there is *Mahābhārata*.

97. Kali does not afflict that person who is engaged in holy rites of Vaiśākha,[1] who is devoted to holy bath in the month of Māgha and who offers lamps in the month of Kārttika.

98. Kali does not afflict that person who listens everyday to the story of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Ātman, the story that destroys sins, that is divine and that bestows salvation.

99. Kali does not oppress that person in whose house *Vaiśvadeva* sacrifice is performed, in whose house there is a splendid Tulasī plant and in whose courtyard there is a splendid cow, an auspicious cow.

100-102. Hence there is nothing to be afraid of in this Yuga, though

1. VV 97-102: *Vaiśākha Vratas* nullified the effects of Kali.

it is full of sins. Do go to the earth quickly, O dear son. This month named Mādhava (Vaiśākha) is conducive to the help of everyone, when the Sun is in Aries. All the thirty lunar days, when the Sun is in Aries, are meritorious. A meritorious deed performed in each of these Tithis shall have crores and crores of times the merit. There too the *Amāvāsyā* (new-moon day) in the month of Caitra is a bestower of salvation on men.

103-108a. It is something that causes delight to Pitṛs and Devas. It brings about salvation immediately.

Those who perform Śrāddha on behalf of Pitṛs on that day, along with the offerings of rice-balls and a pot of water, will attain inexhaustible benefit.

O son, if Śrāddha is performed on the new-moon day in the month of Caitra, it is as good as Śrāddha performed in the sacred place of Gayā and the benefit will be crores of times more.

Even if the Śrāddha is performed on the new-moon day in the month of Caitra with mere greens, it is as good as a crore Śrāddhas are performed by him at Gayā. There is no doubt about it.

If a person does not offer a pot filled with sweet drinks rendered fragrant with camphor and agallochum on the new-moon day in the month of Caitra, he is a murderer of Pitṛs. There is no doubt about it.

He who offers a bamboo shoot along with sweet drinks on the new-moon day in the month of Caitra and performs Śrāddha rite with great devotion, causes uplift of the family.

108b-112. Thanks to the gift of the water-pot, a nectar-shedding river shall flow in the world of the Manes, with cooked rice, pulse, ghee, sweet pie, foodstuffs to be licked and sipped as well as milk-puddings forming the marshy bed of that river, in regard to those who offer Śrāddha, charitable gift etc.

Hence, do go quickly and when the new-moon day arrives, O highly intelligent one, perform the Śrāddha and the offerings of rice-balls along with a pot of water. Adopt the life of a householder for the purpose of helping all. Become satisfied in respect of Dharma, Artha and Kāma. Beget excellent progeny. Thereafter you shall adopt the life of ascetics and wander over all continents as you please."

On being commanded thus by the Pitṛs, the sage hurriedly went to the earth.

113-115. In the meritorious month of Caitra when the Sun was in Aries, he took his holy bath in the morning. He performed water libations to Manes, Devas, and sages. He performed the Śrāddha rites with

the offerings of water-pot destructive of sins. Thereby he brought about the salvation of the Pitṛs without return. He married a chaste woman and begot sons. He made that Tithi that is destructive of sins very famous in the world.

116-117. He himself then joyously went to Gandhamādana. Hence this Tithi named *Darśa* (new-moon day) in the month of Caitra, is exceedingly meritorious. No other Tithi equal to this is seen or heard.

CHAPTER TWENTYTHREE

The Greatness of Akṣaya Tṛtīyā

Śrutadeva said:

1-5 Now I shall narrate the sin-destroying special efficacy of Akṣayatṛtīyā occurring in the bright half of Vaiśākha.

All those who take the holy bath early in the morning at sunrise on that day, shall be rid of sins. They will go to the great region of Viṣṇu.

If a person offers water libation with the Devas, Pitṛs and sages in view, it is as good as the performance of Vedic studies, of sacrifices and of a hundred Śrāddhas by him.

Men who worship Madhusūdana and listen to the (divine) story on the Akṣayatṛtīyā day are partakers of salvation.

If people make charitable gifts on that day for the propitiation of the Slayer of Madhu, it will have auspicious and inexhaustible benefit at the bidding of the Slayer of Madhu (Viṣṇu).

6. This Tithi is exceedingly auspicious. It has Devas, sages and Pitṛs as its deities. It accords satisfaction unto all these three, when the eternal Dharma is performed (on this day).

7. I shall tell, O tiger among kings, the reason for which this Tithi has become famous. Listen to it with great mental concentration.

8. Formerly Purandara fought with Bali. Thereafter Devas and Daityas fought with each other.

9-14. After defeating Bali and forcing him to stay in the nether worlds, he (Indra) came to the earth once again. He went to the her-

mitage of (Bṛhaspati's brother) Utathya.[1] There he saw his wife who was pregnant and hence could walk only very slowly. She was well adorned with a girdle tied to her tremulous hips. The sweet jingling sound of the bangles surpassed that of the inebriated bees and cuckoos. She had beautiful garments of various colours. The beautiful lady was sweet-voiced with beautiful smiles. Her pair of breasts resembled a pair of very fine pitchers. Her eyes were like blue lilies. When she laughed her face resembled a lotus. She appeared very charming with her pale cheeks resembling the interior of a Ketakī flower-bunch. On account of weariness she took deep breaths. Her eyes indicated her pitiable plight. She lay somewhere near the entrance to the hut. She was asleep on her bed. On seeing her, Indra became enamoured and raped her though she was pregnant.[2]

15. The foetus in the womb became miserable and feared that it might fall out. Hence, it closed the vaginal passage by means of its foot.

16. Thereupon, the seminal fluid of the enemy of Bali became scattered on the ground. Therefore Lord Indra became furious with the foetus.

17-19. With the edge of the eyes turned red like copper, he furiously cursed him: "O wicked one, become blind at the very birth, since you have insulted me by closing the vaginal passage." Thereafter, the son named Dīrghatapas was born. (*Defective Text*) Jālata (?) was born from the seminal fluid that was scattered (on the ground) by the foot. Afterwards Indra was afraid of the curse of the sage and he went away. All the religious students laughed on seeing Indra running.

20. Thereupon he became ashamed and went to a splendid cave of Meru. Remaining concealed there, he performed a great and fierce penance.

1. The story of Indra's rape and subsequent hiding, Asuras' conquest of Svarga, Bṛhaspati's attribution of Indra's act to previous Karmas and request to Indra to rejoin his only post of Indra, is not known to Mbh, BhP and other Purāṇas. This story is found in this Purāṇa only and is meant for the glorification of Akṣaya Tṛtiyā.

As a matter of fact, this Tithi is regarded meritorious as the Kṛtayuga began on this day and this Tithi secures permanency to actions performed on this day.

2. In VāP II.37. 37-42, this shameful rape mentioned in v 14 here is attributed to Bṛhaspati who raped his brother Aśija's wife Mamatā, not that of Utathya. The foetus cursed to be blind by him is Dīrghatamas and not Dīrghatapas as given here.

It may be noted that out of 96 incidents about Indra recorded in the *Purāṇic Encyclopedia* not a single one mentions this act with reference to Utathya's wife and his subsequent hiding in Mt. Meru.

21-26. When Devendra resided on Meru, lying concealed there on account of shame, Bali and other Daityas came to know of it through spies. They attacked Suras and rejoiced at Amarāvatī. Bali became Indra. The powerful ones including Śambara enjoyed the prosperity and riches of the Guardians of the Quarters, when the kingdom of the heaven-dwellers became devoid of a lord. Unable to know where their protector was, Devas with Agni at their head asked holy Lord Dhiṣaṇa (i.e. Jupiter or Bṛhaspati), the sinless preceptor of Devas. They asked him about Indra: "Where does our lord stay? This kingdom of the heaven-dwellers is devoid of its leader (and hence) it is attacked by Daityas. Why does the lord not return? A great deal of time has elapsed. O holy lord, O Dhiṣaṇa, we shall go to him at the place where he is (now). We shall request him." On being asked thus by Devas, Dhiṣaṇa said to them:

27-28. "After conquering Bali in Rasātala (nether worlds), he went to the hermitage of Utathya. He forcibly enjoyed (the sage's) wife and was censured by his disciples. He is ashamed to come back to heaven. So he has entered a cave of Meru. The Lord continues to stay there accompanied by Śacī. He is thinking about his own (shameful) act."

29-30. On hearing these words of his, Devas with Agni as their leader, hurriedly went to the cave of Mountain Meru in order to see the lord and request him. On seeing Devendra, the chastiser of Pāka, remaining hidden in the cave they eulogized him by means of eulogies extolling his vigour and exploits as well, well-known in the worlds.

31. "O Indra, obeisance to you, the lord of all the Devas. We are harassed by the Daityas. Without you we are extremely afflicted and dejected.

32. We are dislodged from our abodes and we wander in different lands in great misery. Hence, O Devendra, come and kill the enemies, O suppressor of enemies."

33. On being eulogized by Devas thus, he came through the entrance of the cave. Due to sense of shame, he had bent down his head and he remained gazing at the ground with his eyes.

34. He did not say anything, because his speech was choked on account of sadness. On coming to know of it, Dhiṣaṇa spoke to Surendra who was afraid:

35-38. "O lord of Suras, do not be afraid or suspicious. This universe depends upon Karma. Honour and dishonour, happiness and misery, profit and loss and victory and defeat—all these occur to one in accordance with the previous Karmas. There is no doubt about it. The individual

soul closely follows the Karmas. Misery is accorded by fate in due course. Wise men do not bewail generally (when there is adversity). They are not elated when there is happiness. Hence, this misery has befallen you on account of the Karma that has started its fruition (effect), O lord. O Maghavan, having attained that misery, it does not behove you to lament over it."

On being told thus by his preceptor, Indra spoke to the overlords of the Devas:

Indra said:

39-41. On account of the sexual contact with another man's wife, my strength, vigour, pure reputation, the power of Mantras, the power of scriptural texts and the power of learning—all these have vanished. Hence I remain silent.

On hearing the words of Indra, all Devas accompanied by their preceptor had a confidential meeting to devise means to restore his power once again. Then Guru (Bṛhaspati), the most excellent one among those who are conversant with things, spoke in a piteous tone.

Bṛhaspati said:

42. This month is Vaiśākha by name. It is liked much by the Slayer of Madhu. In this month all the lunar days are meritorious. It is the most favourite month of Mādhava.

43-45. There too in the bright half of this month (the third day) named *Akṣaya* (is the most favourite). If anyone performs holy bath, charitable gift, etc. with faith, thousands of his sins do perish. There is no doubt about it. His prosperity will be free from blemishes. He will acquire strength and courage. Hence for the sake of attaining the benefit, we shall make Indra perform all the good holy rites such as holy bath, charitable gift etc. (on the Akṣaya Tṛtīyā day).

46. He will regain that power of Vidyā, Mantra and scriptural texts. He will have strength, courage and reputation as before.

47. After conferring thus along with the Devas, Guru (i.e. Jupiter) made Indra perform all these holy rites which delight Hari.

48. He made him perform all those holy rites which yield worldly pleasures, on the third lunar day named Akṣaya. Thereby the courage, strength etc. of the lord attained the previous level.

49. The sin of sexual contact with another man's wife disappeared immediately. Thereafter Śakra, whose inauspiciousness was destroyed, became like the Moon liberated from Rāhu.

50-55. Like Viṣṇu he shone amidst the Devas. Afterwards accompanied by Devas he defeated Asuras. It was due to the great potency of the Tṛtīyā that he entered Amarāvatī with all glory and a fanfare of conchs and musical instruments. Permitted by Śakra the Suras went to their respective abodes. Then they got back their shares in the Yajñas as before. Pitṛs got their shares of the rice-balls as before. The sages were contented with the study of the Vedas. The Daityas faced defeat.

Ever since then the Tṛtīyā named Akṣaya became famous in all the worlds. It bestowed satisfaction on the Devas, sages and Pitṛs. Hence this is highly meritorious. It destroys all Karmas. The Tṛtīyā named *Akṣaya* yields worldly pleasures and salvation to men.

CHAPTER TWENTYFOUR

Salvation of a Bitch: Importance of Dvādaśī

Śrutadeva said:

1-5. Of these meritorious Tithis,[1] the twelfth day in the bright half of the month of Vaiśākha, O great king, is destructive of all masses of sins.

If Dvādaśī is not resorted to (i.e. observed religiously) by people, of what avail are charitable gifts, penances, observances of fasts, holy rites, sacrifices and rites of public utility such as digging of wells etc.?

By taking the holy bath on the day of Hari in the morning, one obtains that benefit which is usually obtained by one who gifts away a thousand cows on the banks of Gaṅgā during an eclipse.

If cooked rice is given on the twelfth day in the auspicious bright half of Vaiśākha, each lump of the rice offered is equal in merit to feeding a crore of Brāhmaṇas.

One who gives a pot of gingelly seeds along with honey on the

1. In this Māhātmya, the Tithis specially described as meritorious are the new-moon day, Ekādaśī, Tṛtīyā and Dvādaśī. Hence the plural *Tithiṣu*. PdP adds Saptamī (7th day) to the list of these special days.

twelfth day, rids himself of all bondages and is honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

6. One should perform the *Jāgaraṇa* ('keeping awake') of Hari on the eleventh day of the bright half. One shall then be a living-liberated soul. All the deities shall be delighted.

7. By taking the holy bath on Hari's day early in the morning, one obtains that benefit which is obtained by plunging into the Tīrthas during crores of lunar and solar eclipses.

8. One should worship Viṣṇu with tender leaves of Tulasī on the Dvādaśī day. One shall then redeem the entire family and become the lord of the world of Viṣṇu.

[Interpolation: Worship of Aśvattha tree with flowers and leaves of Tulasī (must be performed). If flowers etc. are not available, one shall worship Madhusūdana by means of grains.][1]

9-11. Listen to the merit of that person who gives rice mixed with curds, a pot of water and appropriate monetary gifts on the twelfth day in the bright half of Vaiśākha. At the bidding of the Chastiser of Madhu (Viṣṇu), he obtains that merit which is obtained by one who feeds a crore of persons every year throughout with delicious dishes having all the six tastes.

12. One who makes the gift of a Śāligrāma stone on the twelfth day in the bright half of Vaiśākha is rid of all sins.

13. If the devotee bathed Madhusūdana with milk on the twelfth day, the merit obtained thereby is equal to that which is obtained by performing Rājasūya and horse-sacrifices.

14. For the propitiation of Madhusūdana, one should worship Viṣṇu on the thirteenth day with various materials such as sugar and honey mixed with milk and curds.

15-22a. (Thereby) he attains that result on the banks of Gaṅgā. There is no doubt about it (?)

One who devoutly bathes Lord Viṣṇu with Pañcāmṛta shall redeem the entire family. He is honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

He who offers sweet drinks in the evening on this day for the pleasure of Hari, immediately casts off old sins like a serpent casting off old slough.

One who gives sweet concoction of cucumber in the evening shall become liberated from the bondage of Karmas thereby.

The devotee should give sugarcane, mango fruit and grapes; there

1. The interpolation is probably due to the influence of PdP where the worship of Aśvattha with flowers and Tulasī leaves is prescribed.

will not be any break in his line up to a hundred generations.

He who gives sweet scents and unguents in the evening on the twelfth day, will be liberated from all external attacks. There is no doubt about this.

Whatever meritorious deed one performs on the twelfth day in the bright half of Vaiśākha, shall yield inexhaustible merit, O excellent king.[1] I shall tell how this has become popular, O king, how it is destructive of all sins, and how it bestows all auspiciousness.

22b-26. Formerly, in the land of Kāśmīra, there was a Brāhmaṇa named Devavrata. He had a very beautiful daughter named Mālinī. He gave her (in marriage) to Satyaśīla, an intelligent, excellent Brāhmaṇa. The intelligent one went to his own land named Yavana after marrying her. Though she was richly endowed with beauty and youth, he was not much enamoured of her. He was always cruel towards her and hated her, O king. The husband did not hate anyone except her. She became furious with him and was eager to win him over, O king. The young woman asked those ladies who had been abandoned by their husbands earlier.

27-32. She was told by them, O king: "Your husband shall definitely come under your control. We have been insulted by being forsaken by our husbands. It is our firm belief that (many) husbands were earlier brought under control by using medicinal potions etc. You do go to one Yoginī today. She will give you splendid medicine or drug. You need not at all entertain suspicions to the contrary. Your husband will begin to behave like a slave."[2]

At their instance, the woman of evil deeds went to the abode of the Yoginī, O king, and obtained very great favour from her. She hurriedly went to her cottage that had a hundred columns. It was spacious and very brilliant. It was sufficiently large. The Yoginī had covered herself with a long cloth. Her matted locks of hair were very long. She was highly refulgent. There were many to attend upon her. She glanced at her slowly.

33-38. With a rosary in her hand, she was engaged in Japa. On being requested by the (Brāhmaṇa lady) the Yoginī gave her a magic spell that could agitate, that could create confidence and that could win

1. After describing the various pious, charitable acts to be performed on the Dvādaśī day of Vaiśākha, the author gives the story of a bitch to illustrate the greatness of Dvādaśī day.

2. Many women (and men as well) believe in such Tāntrikas and get themselves cheated like Mālinī in this story.

over (anyone). Then she bowed down (to the Yoginī) and gave her a ring of great value that was studded with diamonds and rubies, that had a very brilliant red lustre, that was made of gold soft to the touch and that had the refulgence on a par with the rays of the sun.

On seeing the ring placed at her feet, the Yoginī became delighted. She could understand the reaction in her heart due to the disregard of her husband. The (Brāhmaṇa lady) was told thus, O king, by the ascetic woman engaged in her welfare: "This powder along with this amulet is powerful enough to captivate all living beings. Give the powder to your husband and wear the amulet round your neck. Your husband can be won over. He will not approach any other beautiful woman. He will not utter anything displeasing to you, even if you misbehave."

39-45. With the powder and the amulet she came back to her husband's house. At dusk, the powder was administered to her husband in milk. The amulet was tied round her neck. She did not feel worried thereafter. The husband (of the lady) who had drunk the milk along with the powder, O most excellent king, became afflicted with consumption due to that powder. He became tired and worn out day by day. Worms and germs grew in abundance in the awfully putrefying wounds. Within a few days the condition of the husband became exceedingly critical. But she lived as she was pleased with her vicious deeds and union with different men.

The husband whose natural lustre and brilliance perished and whose sense-organs became disordered continued to lament day and night. He said to her: "O splendid lady, I am your slave. I seek refuge in you. Save me. I do not at all wish for any other woman." On realizing his plight, she became afraid, O king. She desired that her husband should continue to live not because she wanted his welfare, but because she wanted him as her ornament. She immediately went to the Yoginī and said everything to her.

46. A second drug was handed over to her for quelling the burning sensation. When the drug was administered the husband got relief instantaneously and regained his normal health.

47-51. The paramour (of hers) stayed on in the house under the pretext of attending to some domestic work (of urgency). She had lovers belonging to all castes and creeds, all staying in the house itself. The husband was powerless to say anything (against her). Yet, the sin arising from her misdeeds produced germs in her body. They pierced her bones. They were like Kāla, the annihilator, and Yama, the controller. Holes were made by them in the nose, tongue and ears as well

as in the breasts. The fingers became split. She became lame and ultimately she died. She met with hellish tortures. She was roasted and boiled in a copper cauldron for one hundred and fifty thousand years. She was then reborn repeatedly a hundred times as a bitch.

52. She always had some defect, e.g. the nose cut or the ears split. Her head became infested with worms always. Sometimes the tail was cut or a foot broken. She was flogged in every house.

53. Afterwards, she was born as a bitch in the house of the maid-servant of Brāhmaṇa Padmabandhu in the land of Sauvīra. In this life too she suffered from many miseries.

54. She had her nose cut, ears split, eyes damaged and the tail amputated. She was greatly bewildered. The head became infested with worms and the vaginal passage too became infected and putrefied.

55-57. Thus, O king, thirty years passed by in this birth. As good luck would have it, as a result of her own Karma (the following events happened). On the twelfth day in the bright half of Vaiśākha month, when the Sun was in Aries, Padmabandhu's son took his bath in a river and went home with his clothes fully drenched, with bodily and mental purity. He went near the raised platform for Tulasī plants and washed his feet. Beneath the platform the bitch lay asleep.[1]

58. In the morning, at the time of sunrise, she was bathed in the waters with which the feet were washed. Immediately all the inauspiciousness perished and she had the recollection of her previous births.

59-64. Recollecting the deeds committed by her previously, that bitch howled piteously saying "O sage, save me." Recollecting her evil actions she described them to the great ascetic. She was exceedingly frightened. She told him how she administered poison to her husband and what all wicked things she did. "O Brāhmaṇa, if any other young woman were to administer drug for winning over her husband she will be wicked in conduct. Her Dharma will be futile. She will be fried and cooked in (in the hell named Tāmrabhājana or) copper vessels (in the hells).

Husband is the leader and support; husband is the preceptor. Husband is the excellent deity. If she acts detrimentally (to her husband), how can a chaste woman attain happiness? She will be reborn hundred times among lower animals. She will be born hundreds of times and crores of times as a worm. Hence, O Brāhmaṇa, the behests of their husband must be carried out by women.

1. Redemptions from sins by coincidences is found to be a favourite device.

I too foresee despicable ill births full of tortures, O Brāhmaṇa, if you do not redeem me today even as I have come in front of you.

65-69. Hence uplift me, O Brāhmaṇa, though I have been a sinner full of misdeeds, by offering me your merits. You have performed many meritorious deeds on the twelfth day in the bright half of the month of Vaiśākha, increasing your good merits by means of holy baths, charitable gifts and feeding (learned men) with cooked rice. Though I have been wicked in conduct, O Brāhmaṇa, I will be liberated thereby. O Brāhmaṇa, one who takes holy bath on that day even in his own house, shall undoubtedly attain the benefits of all the Tīrthas. Penances, gifts, Homas and worship of Devas and other holy rites, if performed on the Dvādaśī day, shall have inexhaustible benefits. If you have any such benefit to your credit give it entirely to me.

70. Give me the merit that you have acquired by observing fast on the Dvādaśī day and Pāraṇā on the thirteenth day. Give that too to me. Obviously, I will attain salvation thereby.

71-75. O highly fortunate one, take pity on me, the wretched one. You are sympathetic to the pitiable and the wretched. Janārdana is the lord of the poor; he is the lord of the universe. He is your lord. All those who belong to him are like him. As is the king, so are the subjects. O destroyer of the region (or hell) of Yama, save me. I am extremely miserable. I am a piteous bitch staying at your door. O sage, kind to the wretched, save me. This auspicious Tithi burns the sins of a thousand murders of Brāhmaṇas, a thousand slaughters of cows and crores of sexual intercourses with forbidden women. O great sage, give unto me the great merit that you have earned through what has been performed by you on that Tithi. Lift me up, I am in agony. O lord, save me. In the end, I offer you obeisance, O Brāhmaṇa. Obeisance to you, the eminent Brāhmaṇa."

76-80. On hearing these words of the bitch, the son of the sage spoke to her: "O bitch, all creatures experience both happiness and sorrow as a result of what they themselves have done. Hence what is there to be done by you, an insignificant creature? As a result of your sinful conduct, your husband, a Brāhmaṇa, was won over through the amulet, powdered drug etc.

A sin committed against good men shall cause misery to oneself. A meritorious deed performed in favour of honourable and good men shall be destructive of misery.

If both these are done against or in favour of sinners, they will cause only sin and misery like sweetened milk offered to a serpent which

increases its poisonous nature."

When the son of the sage said thus, the bitch became extremely sad. She groaned loudly and howled once again in front of his father speaking as follows:

81-86. "O Padmabandhu, save the bitch that stays at your very door, that eats what is left over by you everyday. Save me. This is the opinion of those who are conversant with the Vedas, that those people should be redeemed and lifted up by a noble-souled householder, who are to be nurtured and fed by him. Cāṇḍālas, crows and dogs are always objects of compassion. They partake of the oblations everyday.

If he does not redeem a person who should be nurtured and fed, especially when the person is weak and afflicted with sickness etc., he will fall down. There is no doubt about it. This is the opinion of those who are conversant with the Vedas.

Hari, the maker of the worlds, has created another maker (i.e. Brahmā) and protects him himself. He protects all the creatures. In the same manner persons serving oneself known as wives etc. should be protected by persons in power. It is Hari's behest that dependents should be protected.

87-88a. If any living being neglects his duty of protecting his dependents and turns his attention elsewhere, whether by chance or intentionally, he is an enemy of the Lord. He is the murderer of everyone. He goes to the worlds of Yama. Since it is your duty and since you are merciful, redeem me who am in a miserable state."

88b-89. On hearing these words of that (bitch) who was distressed, the son remained in the house, but Padmabandhu, the storehouse of mercy, hurried out of the house. He asked her, "What is this?" The son recounted everything. On hearing the words of his son he was surprised very much. He said to him:

Padmabandhu said:

90. O my son, how is it that such words were uttered by you? These are not the words of good men, O son of excellent countenance.

91-92. Sinners who do everything for the sake of their own happiness are treated with contempt. See, my son, all people (should work) for helping others. The moon, the sun, wind, night, fire, water, sandalwood, trees and good people—all these help others.

93. On coming to know that Daityas were exceedingly powerful, the gift of his own bones was made by Dadhīci mercifully for helping Devas.

94. O highly fortunate one, formerly his own flesh was given to a hungry hawk for the sake of (helping) a dove by king Śibi.

95. There was a king formerly on the earth named Jīmūtavāhana. His life was surrendered by him too for the noble-souled Garuḍa.

96-98. Hence a learned Brāhmaṇa must be merciful. Lord (Indra) showers rain on the pure ones. But does he not shower rain on the impure ones (too)? Does not the moon always illuminate the house of Cāṇḍālas too? Hence I will redeem this bitch who is repeatedly entreating by means of my own merits just as one lifts up a cow sinking into mire.

Thus the highly intelligent one promised after repudiating his son:

99-103. "The great merit arising from the Dvādaśī day is given, is given. O Bitch, go to the abode of Hari, rid of all your sins."

At these words she suddenly cast off her old worn out body. She became a splendid (lady) having a divine form. She had the refulgence of a hundred suns comparable to Goddess Sāvitrī. She took leave of that Brāhmaṇa and went away brightening the ten quarters.

She enjoyed excellent pleasures in heaven and afterwards was born on the earth from Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the lord, under the name Urvaśī.[1]

By the power of the twelfth day in the bright half of Vaiśākha she became a favourite of Devas and attained the state of a celestial damsel.

104-106. The bitch became a goddess. She attained the form which can be attained by Yogins, has the refulgence of fire and is very excellent and worthy of being coveted, is the highest object of desire, having attained which even saints become deluded.

Afterwards Padmabandhu made that Tithi popular—that Tithi which increases merit and which is very dear to Viṣṇu. It is superior to a crore of lunar and solar eclipses; it is more meritorious than all the merits put together; it surpasses even all the Yajñas put together. Such a tithi was made famous in all the three worlds by that Brāhmaṇa.

1. This new information regarding the previous birth of Urvaśī is untraced in VR and in Mbh and BhP. The tale is specially meant for the glorification of this Vaiśākha Vrata.

CHAPTER TWENTYFIVE

The Conclusion

Śrutadeva said:

1-4. The three meritorious Tithis, toward the end of the bright half, ending with the full-moon day, in the month of Vaiśākha,[1] are very auspicious.

The last Tithis are called Puṣkariṇī. They are destructive of all sins. If one is incompetent to take holy bath throughout the month of Vaiśākha, he should take bath in these Tithis. He will get the full benefit. All the Devas come on the Trayodaśī day and sanctify creatures.

On the full-moon day they appear here along with Viṣṇu and all the Tīrthas. On the Caturdaśī day Devas sanctify these along with Yajñas.

5-8. They sanctify everyone whether (he be) a murderer of a Brāhmaṇa or a drink-addict. It was on the Ekādaśī day in the month of Vaiśākha that the splendid nectar appeared formerly. On the Dvādaśi day it was guarded by Viṣṇu, the powerful one. On the Trayodaśī day Hari made the Devas drink the nectar. On the Caturdaśī the Lord killed the Daityas who were antagonistic to Devas. On the full-moon day the Devas regained their sovereignty. Thereupon, the exceedingly delighted Devas granted boons to these three Tithis. Out of delight their eyes beamed like full blown (lotuses).

9. These three Tithis of the month of Vaiśākha are very auspicious. They bestow sons, grandsons and other benefits on men. They are conducive to the destruction of sins.

10. A base man who does not take bath throughout this month, shall obtain the full benefit by taking the holy bath on these three Tithis.

11. A man who does not take the holy bath or does not perform the holy rites or make charitable gifts etc. during these three Tithis too, is reborn in the womb of a Cāṇḍāla woman and then falls into Raurava hell.

1. The author follows *Pūrṇimānta māsa*—the calendar in which the month ends with Pūrṇimā, full-moon day. Hence the importance of the last three '*Puṣkariṇi*' *Tithis*, viz. 13th, 14th and 15th (full moon) of Vaiśākha. If one observes Vaiśākha Vratas on these Tithis, he gets full result of complete observance of this Vrata. Though verse 2 calls these collectively 'Puṣkariṇi', the name really designates only the full-moon day (v 18).

12. He who takes hot-water bath on the three days of Vaiśākha falls into Raurava hell and stays there as long as fourteen Indras rule.

13. He who does not offer cooked rice mixed with curds with Pitṛs in view, is reborn in Piśāca species and remains there till the annihilation of all living beings.

14. If a restraint is made on desires actively pursuing their objects in the month of Vaiśākha, he will certainly attain Sāyujya with Viṣṇu. There is no doubt about it.

15. If a person who is incompetent to observe restraints throughout the month does it on these three days, he attains the entire benefit and rejoices in the abode of Viṣṇu.

16-17. "If a man does not manifestly perform holy bath and other rites with Devas, Pitṛs, preceptor and Viṣṇu in view, we (i.e. the Devas) will curse him that he will be devoid of progeny, long life and welfare."

The Devas granted these boons formerly and went to their respective abodes.

18. Hence the three Tithis are meritorious and destructive of all masses of sins. The group of the three last ones is called Puṣkariṇī and is conducive to the increase of sons and grandsons.

19. A woman endowed with good fortune who gives at least once sweet pie and milk pudding to a Brāhmaṇa on the full-moon day, shall obtain a renowned son.

20. If a person reads the Bhagavad-Gītā[1] during the last three days, he will obtain the benefits of (many) horse-sacrifices for each day. There is no doubt about this.

21. Who in heaven or on the earth is competent to recount the merit of that person who reads 'The Thousand Names' (*Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma*) during the (last) three days?

22. By bathing Lord Madhusūdana with milk, (repeating) the thousand names (*Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma*), one goes to the sinless world of Viṣṇu.

23. If a person worships Madhusūdana by means of all his riches, his worlds do not perish even during the annihilation at the close of the Yugas, Kalpas etc.

24. If the month of Vaiśākha passes by and a person does not take the holy bath or make charitable gifts, he is a slayer of a Brāhmaṇa,

1. VV 20-26 show that the three Vaiṣṇavite Texts—Bhagavad Gītā, Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma and Śrīmad Bhāgavata had a special place in Vaiṣṇavas' life. Hence the special prescription of the reading etc. of these texts.

a murderer of his preceptor and slaughterer of the Pitṛs.

25. One who reads half of a verse or even one-fourth of a verse from *Bhāgavata* everyday during the month of Vaiśākha, attains the state of Brahman (i.e. salvation).

26. He who listens to the sacred text of *Bhāgavata* during these three days is not contaminated by sins like a leaf of lotus that is not affected by water.

27. By resorting to (i.e. observing Vaiśākha Vrata on) these three days the state of Devas has been attained by some men, the state of Siddhas by some and salvation by some.

28-30. Salvation is attained through knowledge of Brahman or through death at Prayāga or by taking the holy bath invariably throughout the month of Vaiśākha.

By letting loose a black bull and by taking the holy bath, a man is liberated from all bondages and attains the greatest region.

By giving a cow along with her calf to an eminent Brāhmaṇa who suffers on account of a large family, one will be rid of the danger of premature or accidental death here, and shall attain the greatest region hereafter.

31. One who is devoid of holy bath and charitable gifts on the full-moon day of the month of Vaiśākha takes rebirth as a dog hundred times. Thereafter, he is born as a worm in faeces.

32. All the thirty-five million Tīrthas in the three worlds gathered together for mutual discussion as they were afraid of masses of sins.[1]

33. "Sinful persons come and shed off their dirt in us. How can this accumulated dirt be got rid of?" This was their worry.

34-38a. They went to Lord Hari and sought refuge in him because he is worthy of being sought refuge in and because his very foot is the source of a Tīrtha. After eulogizing him with many hymns, they promptly requested him:

"O Lord of Devas, O Lord of the universe, O destroyer of all masses of sins, sinful persons take bath in us and cast off all their sins in us. They go to your region. They had been carrying out your behest on the earth. O Janārdana, how will our sin perish? We are desirous of your feet as our refuge and resort to them. Tell us the means thereof."

On being entreated thus, Lord Hari, the sanctifier of all living beings, laughingly spoke to those Tīrthas, in a voice resembling thunder in sonority.

1. VV 32-47 exhort the need and importance of early bath in Tīrthas.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

38b-43. During the three days towards the close of the bright half of the month of Vaiśākha when the Sun is in Aries, which is as dear to me as my vital airs, all of you do flood over the water that is present in the open air. It is meritorious and full of all the Tīrthas(?) Thereby you will be rid of those sins. You will have meritorious forms free from impurities. May the sins dropped into you all by people and then discharged by you all stay in those persons who do not take the holy bath during all those three days.

Thus Viṣṇu whose foot is the source of origin of Tīrthas, granted boons unto the Tīrthas.

After permitting them (to go), the Lord vanished there itself by means of his Yogic power. They went to their respective abodes. Every year during those last three days in Vaiśākha all those Tīrthas discharge the mass of their sins and become free from impurities.

44-50. "May those who do not take the holy bath during the last three days in Vaiśākha become the recipients of the sins of all the people." This is the curse that the Tīrthas give to those who do not take bath.

There is no other sinner on a par with one who does not take the holy bath in the course of the three days. Even after poring over all the scriptural texts, such a one is not seen or heard. Hence the rites of holy bath, charitable gifts, worship etc. must be performed on all the three days. Otherwise one falls into Naraka and stays there as long as fourteen Indras reign.

Thus everything has been recounted to you, O highly intelligent Śrutakīrti.

Everything that you had asked about the greatness of Vaiśākha has been recounted to you in accordance with what was seen and heard (by me). This treatise on the glory of Vaiśākha has been explained by Mādhava (himself).

Even Brahmā is not competent to recount it entirely even in hundreds of years.

Formerly on the top of Kailāsa Śaṅkara himself recounted the greatness of Vaiśākha to Pārvatī who asked him (about it). He recounted it for a period of a hundred years. Still the topic could not be exhausted. He stopped because he was not capable of proceeding further.

51. Excepting Viṣṇu, the Lord of the worlds, Nārāyaṇa who is free from ailments, who indeed can describe the excellent glory (of the

month) in its entirety?

52-55a. Formerly with a desire for the welfare of all the people, all the sages wished to explain a small bit of the sin-destroying greatness. But no one reached the limit of explanation, as he was incapable, O king.

You also do perform charitable gifts and other holy rites in the month of Vaiśākha. Thereby you will obtain worldly pleasures and salvation. There is no doubt about it.

After enlightening thus the king of Mithilā named Janaka, Śrutadeva thought of taking leave of him and go.

55b-59. That saintly king shed tears of joy and his eyes became bedimmed thereby. For the sake of his own prosperity, he celebrated a grand festival of great charm.

He made the sage sit in a palanquin and circumambulate the entire village. He himself followed him accompanied by the army consisting of four divisions. They then returned to the inner apartments. The king placed before him all sorts of riches, garments, ornaments, cows, plots of land, gingelly seeds and gold. He circumambulated the sage, bowed down to him and stood in front of him with palms joined in reverence. Thereafter Śrutadeva of great refulgence and reputation, became exceedingly delighted and contented. The sage then went back to his abode.

60-61. Holy bath, charitable gift, worship and listening to the story on the thirteenth and fourteenth as well as on the full-moon day--these are the holy rites. One who is devoted to holy rites of Vaiśākha shall attain salvation as in the case of Dhanaśarmā,[1] the Brāhmaṇa, and the Pretas before.[2]

1. The story is given in Vaiśākha Māhātmya in PdP.

2. This is a reference to PdP, *Pātāla Khaṇḍa* 98.45-111. Dhanaśarmā, a Brāhmaṇa from Madhyadeśa, met three Piśācas. Being afraid and uttering Viṣṇu's name he asked them who they were. Being pleased to hear the name of the god they told him their names Kṛtaghna ('ungrateful one'), Vidaivata ('God-less'), A-vaiśākha (non-observer of Vaiśākha-Vrata). The last one who happened to be the father of Dhanaśarmā told him (Dhanaśarmā) to convey his message to his son (Dhanaśarmā) to observe holy bath, make religious gifts, worship and listen to Viṣṇu's tales on these last three days of Vaiśākha and give the merit thereof to them. Dhanaśarmā did it and the Piśācas were redeemed.

The last three days of *Vaiśākha* are associated with the following important episodes:

13th day: (i) Viṣṇu made Devas drink Amṛta. Devas regained their kingdom (v 7)

Nārada said:

62-64. Thus, O Aṁbarīṣa, the great narrative has been recounted to you. By listening to it one can destroy all the sins. It brings about all riches. Thereby one obtains worldly pleasures and salvation and perfect knowledge.

On hearing his words Aṁbarīṣa of great renown became very pleased within. All his external activities ceased. He bowed down his head and fell on the ground like a log of wood.

65-67a. He adored him by means of all his riches. After being adored, Nārada, the sage, took leave of him and went to another world. The intelligent sage cannot stay in one place due to a curse.

Aṁbarīṣa, the saintly king, performed these splendid holy rites mentioned by Nārada. Thereby he got merged into the Supreme Brahman devoid of attributes.

Sūta said:

67b-69. He who listens to or reads this great story that destroys sins and increases merit attains the greatest goal. Salvation is within the reach of those persons in whose house a manuscript of this book exists, O bestowers of honour. What to speak of those who listen to it themselves!

:: End of Vaiśākhamāsa-Māhātmya ::

(ii) Viṣṇu killed Hiraṇyākṣa.
14th day: (i) Viṣṇu killed Devas' opponents.
(ii) Viṣṇu killed demon Madhu.
15th Day: (i) Devas re-established in their kingdom.
(ii) Viṣṇu uplifted the earth from the ocean.

Book II: VAIṢṆAVAKHAṆḌA

Section VIII: AYODHYĀ-MĀHĀTMYA

CHAPTER ONE

The Greatness of Viṣṇuhari

Obeisance to Śrī Gaṇeśa

The narration of the glory of Ayodhyā[1] is begun.

1. Victorious is Vyāsa, the son of Parāśara, the delighter of the heart of Satyavatī. The entire universe drinks the literary nectar issuing from the lotus-like mouth of (that sage).

2. After bowing to Nārāyaṇa, Nara, the excellent one among men,[2] and Goddess Sarasvatī, one should recite *Jaya* (the Purāṇa).[3]

Vyāsa said:

3-14. Rāma, the noble-souled king, performed a Sattra (sacrifice) lasting for twelve years in the great holy spot named Kurukṣetra[4].

1. Ayodhyā: The captual city of kings of Ikṣvāku dynasty to which Dāśarathi Rāma, the most righteous king, belonged. It is known as Sāketa in the Buddhist Literature and in Patañjali (cf Sageda of Ptolemy). Due to the international popularity of Rāma the ancient rulers of Thailand named their capital as Ayuthia (Ayodhyā). It was 'unassailable' hence it was called "A-yodhyā" (a popular etymology). Maybe due to the greatness of Rāma it heads the list of seven Indian cities "giving Mokṣa to their residents", the other such cities being Mathurā, Māyā (Haridwar), Kāśī, Kāñcī (Conjeveram), Avantī (Ujjain), (Jagannātha) Purī, Dvārakā.

Due to the association of various incidents of Rāma's life therewith and its religious efficacy, a Māhātmya (glorious description) came to be written about it (Ayodhyā).

2. *Narottama* may mean Vyāsa also—*Commentary.*

3. This benedictory verse shows that the author wrote this independent work on a par with Mbh. '*Jaya*' originally was restricted to *Bhārata* but was later used to indicate a Purāṇa or a Pūrṇic work like a *Māhātmya* of a Tīrtha.

4. Kurukṣetra: Thaneswar and the area including Sonepat, Panipat, Karnal in Haryana. It was a land situated between Sarasvatī on the north and Dṛṣadvatī on the south (Mbh, *Vana* 83.204-205). Like Naimiṣāraṇya, Kurukṣetra is associated with Sattras (sacrifices of long duration). The Māhātmya-writer is innocent of the geographical limits of Rāma's kingdom. So he makes Rāma, a performer of a Sattra at Kurukṣetra. VR ends with Yuddha-Kāṇḍa (the Uttara Kāṇḍa is spurious). VR up to the end of Yuddha Kāṇḍa does not give the credit of such a sacrifice to Rāma.

Holy sages from various places had been invited and they had assembled there. All the sages who had mastered the Vedas and were the inhabitants of Himalayas, the residents of Naimiṣa forest[1] (had come there with their disciples).

(Sages) who were great souls, knowers of all the three times (i.e. past, present and future), those who resided in Arbuda (Mt. Abu) forest, Daṇḍaka forest, Mahendra mountain, Vindhya mountain, Jaṁbū forest, banks of Godāvarī, Vārāṇasī, the residents of Mathurā, celibate ones, those dwelling at Ujjayinī, those who had resorted to Dvārakā and Badarikāśrama, the residents of Māyāpurī (Haridwar) and Kānti (Kāñcī)—all these and many other sages devoid of impurities had come there along with their disciples.

All of them were pure in mind. They had mastered Vedas and Vedāṅgas. After their holy bath they performed Japa and other holy rites duly with Bhāradvāja (? Bharadvāja), the master of Vedas and Vedāṅgas as their leader, they occupied different kinds of seats such as *Bṛṣī* etc. in their due order.

They discussed different kinds of Tīrthas during the intervals between two holy rites. Seated comfortably they talked to one another freely.

Towards the end of the discussions of those sages of purified souls, Sūta[2], the highly intelligent sage of great refulgence, came there. His name was Romaharṣaṇa. He was a disciple of Vyāsa. He was conversant with the Purāṇas.

After making obeisance to those sages in their proper order and after being permitted by the sages, he too sat down. The pure and excellent sages, Bhāradvāja (?) and others, asked the excellent sage, Sūta Romaharṣaṇa:

1. Naimisa Forest: Generally taken as Nimsar, near the Nimsar Station of the former Oudh-Rohilkhand railway (De 135) But V.V. Mirashi has shown it to be somewhere in Sultanpur District, some 40 miles from Ayodhyā (*Purāṇa* X.I.34). VāP I.1.10.12 records a Naimiṣa forest at Kurukṣetra where Adhisīma Kṛṣṇa performed a Sattra.

2. Sūta: It is the name of the subcaste of the Purāna-narrator Romaharṣaṇa A Sūta is an offspring of a Brāhmana female and a Kṣatriya male (Manu X.11; Yājñavalkya I.93). He was not eligible for Vedic Studies but could recite Itihāsa and Purāṇa. At the time of Kauṭilya, the reciter of a Purāṇa, "Paurāṇika", had a higher status as a sage (*Arthaśāstra* III.7). Later Purāna-writers (like the present writer) confirmed his status. Romaharṣana is probably his title due to the thrilling effect of his oratory.

The sages said:

15. O highly fortunate one, many stories concerning different Tīrthas have been heard from you. O highly intelligent one, all the Purāṇas along with their esoteric teachings have been heard (by us).

16. Now we wish to hear about the greatness of the great city of Ayodhyā which is splendid due to its good qualities, along with its eternal secrets.

17. Of what type is the perpetually pure city of Ayodhyā which is so dear to Viṣṇu—a city praised in the Vedas as the first[1] among all cities which are bestowers of liberation from Saṁsāra?

18. What is the situation of that city? Who were the kings there? What are the meritorious Tīrthas (there)? What is their importance?

19. What sort of benefit is obtained by men by resorting to Ayodhyā? O Sūta, what is its history? What are the rivers and the confluences (there)?

20-21. What is the merit acquired by taking the holy bath therein and of making charitable gifts there, O highly intelligent one? O Sūta, superior to everyone in merits, we wish to hear all these from you. We wish to hear everything in due order. You know all the facts about them. It behoves you now to recount the greatness of the great city Ayodhyā.

Sūta said:

22. O ascetics, I know all the Purāṇas along with the legendary anecdotes and the esoteric doctrines truly with the favour of Vyāsa.

23. After bowing down to him, I shall recount to you all, the glory of the great city of Ayodhyā as it actually exists along with all the secrets.

24. I always bow down to the great man Vedavyāsa, son of Parāśara, the excellent and calm-minded sage who is endowed with learning, is bestower of noble and great intellect, can be understood through Vedas and Vedāṅgas, has subdued all (desires for) sensual pleasures, who has pure and extensive refulgence, is always modest and whose

1. Vide Note 1 on p. 139. The verse listing these cities is as follows:
Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā. Kāśī, Kāñcī, Avantikā ।
Purī, Dvārāvatī caiva saptaite mokṣadāyakāḥ ॥

sole origin is (Lord Viṣṇu) who is to be venerated by all.

25. Oṁ, obeisance to that holy lord Vyāsa of unmeasured splendour, with whose favour I know this glory of Ayodhyā.

26-28. May all the sages with their disciples hear with attention. I shall recount the splendid glory of the city of Ayodhyā. It was heard by Skanda from Nārada. Then it was narrated to Agastya. Formerly it was recounted to Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana by Agastya.

O ascetics, it was obtained from Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana by me. With great respect I shall recount it to you all who are desirous of hearing.

29. I bow down to the immutable Rāma, the Supreme Brahman whose eyes resemble lotus, who is as dark-blue as a flower of flax (in complexion) and who killed Rāvaṇa.

30. Great and holy is the city of Ayodhyā which is inaccessible to perpetrators of evil deeds. Who would not like to visit Ayodhyā wherein Lord Hari himself resided?

31. This divine and extremely splendid city is on the banks of the river Sarayū.[1] It is on a par with Amarāvatī (the capital of Indra) and is resorted to by many ascetics.

32-34. It is full of elephants, horses, chariots and foot-soldiers. It tops (all cities) in its richness and prosperity. It has numerous broad roads and great rampart walls and golden arched gateways resembling mountain-ridges and peaks. The squares and cross-roads are well planned and neatly maintained. There are many-storeyed palaces with numerous (artistic) alterations and modifications in the walls. It is rendered splendid by many tanks with excellent water abounding in full-blown lotuses. It is well-adorned with shrines of deities possessing divine splendour and is resounded with the sounds of the chanting of the Vedas (which can be heard everywhere).

35-36. The sounds of lutes, flutes, Mṛdaṅga drums etc. make it very excellent. It has different kinds of parks and gardens abounding in trees bearing fruits in all the seasons. There are Śāla trees (*Vatica robusta*), palmyras, coconuts, jack trees, Indian gooseberry trees, mango trees, wood-apple trees, Aśoka and other trees.

37-38. There are many flowering plants such as jasmine, Jāti

1. Sarayū: The river rises in Kumaun mountains and came to be called Sarayū after its confluence with the Kālinadī (De 182). But Mbh (*Ādi* 169.20-21) regards that it is one of the seven streams of Gaṅgā from Himalayas. Later in *Anuśāsana* 155.23-24, the Mānasa lake is said to be its source.

(another variety of jasmine), Bakula (Mimisops elengi), Pāṭalī (trumpet flowers), Nāga (variety of citron), Caṁpaka (*Michelia campaka*), Karavīra (oleander), Karṇikāra (*Cathartocarpus fistula*), Ketakī (*Pandamus odoratissimus*) etc. There are great fruit bearing trees like Niṁba (margosa), Jambīra (a variety of citron), Kadalī (plantain) and Mātuliṅga (pomegranate). There are Nāgaras (*Cyperus pertenuis*) having the fragrance of sandalwood.

39-42. It has many kinds of citizens of high accomplishments such as princes having the refulgence of Devas, excellent women of great beauty who are on a par with celestial damsels, eminent poets of great excellence, Brāhmaṇas equal to Bṛhaspati (in intelligence), merchants and other citizens who are like the Kalpa-trees.

Horses there are on a par with Uccaiḥśravas and elephants are like the elephants guarding the cardinal points. Thus in various ways and features that city is equal to the city of Indra.

It was here that the kings of the Solar race with Ikṣvāku as the foremost one, were born. All of them were exclusively devoted to protection of the subjects.

43. The city is built on the banks of the river Sarayū whose waters are meritorious. Its banks are echoed with hummings of bees and chirpings of birds. It is a sparklingly clear and beautiful river with Mānasa lake as its source.

44. It is full of holy water. The touch of this river is as excellent as that of Gaṅgā. Great sages have resorted to its banks. It is wakeful and watchful. It is the loftiest in the world (in sanctity).

45. Gaṅgā issued forth from the big toe of the right foot of Hari, O excellent sages, and the splendid Sarayū issued forth from the big toe of his left foot.

46. Hence these two rivers are exceedingly meritorious and are bowed to by Devas. Merely by taking the holy bath in these two rivers one gets rid of the sin of the murder of a Brāhmaṇa.

47. Agastya, the pot-born sage, knew the efficacy of this Tīrtha with the favour of Skanda. Thereafter the sage went to Ayodhyā on a pilgrimage.

48-50. He performed the rites of the pilgrimage in due order. He took the holy bath in accordance with the injunctions and offered libations to the Pitṛs. He performed the worship of all the deities in the prescribed manner. He made obeisance to all the Tīrthas duly. Having seen the glory of the Tīrtha directly, he

derived a great deal of happiness strengthened with the feeling of having fulfilled his duty. Agastya experienced the emotion of ecstatic delight (with hair standing on end all over his body).

51. The excellent sage stayed there for three nights. Having completed the pilgrimage duly, he praised the great city of Ayodhyā and started from there.

52. On seeing him beaming with excess of delight, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa asked him what the cause of his great delight was.

Vyāsa said:

53-54. O great Brāhmaṇa, whence are you coming back? O excellent sage, you are experiencing abundance of supreme bliss now. What is the reason for which this extreme delight has occurred to you? O Brāhmaṇa, speak it to me. Seeing your delight, my heart too feels exceedingly delighted.

Agastya said:

55-56. Oh! It is a great wonder. It is highly surprising, O excellent sage. On seeing the glory of Ayodhyā, O ascetic, I have attained this excessive bliss today.

On hearing the words of Agastya, Vyāsa said to that sage:

Vyāsa said:

57-58. O holy lord, tell me accurately and in detail, the greatness and glory of the great city Ayodhyā along with its secrets and its superior qualities. What is the procedure of the pilgrimage? What are the Tīrthas? What is the method of performing the Yātrā? What is the benefit of the holy bath therein? O great sage, what is the benefit of the charitable gift (given there)? Recount all this in detail, O excellent one among eloquent persons.

Agastya replied:

59. Oh! Blessed indeed is your intellect, O ascetic, for you are enquiring about the glory of Ayodhyā.

60. The letter "*A*" indicates Brahman (Brahmā?); Viṣṇu is meant by the letter "*YA*". The letter "*DHA*" is a form of Rudra. Thus shines the name Ayodhyā.[1]

1. A Purānic etymology attributing meaning to every syllable of *A-yo-dhyā*.

61. Since this city is not reached by all (major) sins like the murder of a Brāhmaṇa etc. along with minor sins, it (the city) is known as Ayodhyā. (i.e. The city is beyond the pale of sins.)

62. O Brāhmaṇa, this is the first city of Viṣṇu. It does not touch the earth. This city that causes merit on the earth is stationed on Sudarśana, the Discus of Viṣṇu.

63. By whom can the glory of this (city) be (adequately) described, O ascetic? It is here that Lord Viṣṇu himself dwells respectfully.

64-67. The holy place is situated thus[1]: Beginning from Sahasradhārā, a distance of a Yojana constitutes the eastern part. Similarly in the west too, the limit is Samata (?) up to one Yojana. In the southern and the northern parts Sarayū and Tamasā form the boundary. This is the situation of the holy place. This is the place wherein stands the *sanctum sanctorum* of Hari. This city of Viṣṇu is said to have the shape of a fish. Its head is in the west between Gopratāra and Asita, O Brāhmaṇa. Its back is in the east and its middle portion lies from north to south. In this city, O highly fortunate one, the Lord designated as Viṣṇu-Hari dwells. His power is already well-known.

Vyāsa said:

68. O holy lord, what is the power of this Lord who is glorified by you as Viṣṇu-Hari?[2] O tiger among sages, how did he become famous? Describe all this in detail to me.

Agastya said:

69-78. Formerly there was an excellent Brāhmaṇa well-known by the name Viṣṇu Śarmā. He was a knower of the essence of Vedas and Vedāṅgas; he was devoted to pious and holy rites. He regularly practised Yoga and meditation. He was engrossed in devotion to Viṣṇu. That excellent Vaiṣṇava came to Ayodhyā once in the course of his pilgrimage.

The heroic Brāhmaṇa Viṣṇu (Śarmā) thought that Viṣṇu must be present there directly and personally. (For that purpose) he began to perform penance. He started his austerities with green

1. Boundaries of Purāṇic Ayodhyā.

2 The story is meant to explain the name of the deity 'Viṣṇu-Hari' which was so-called as it was installed by Viṣṇu Śarmā, vv 101-105.

roots and fruits forming his diet.

During summer he performed penance seated in the midst of five fires. During rainy season he had nothing to protect him (to ward off the rain). During early winter he used to take his holy bath in the excellent lake and perform the worship of Viṣṇu according to the injunctions. He brought under his control all the sense-organs and kept his mind free from impurities.

He fixed his mind on Viṣṇu and restrained his vital airs. He repeatedly uttered "OṂ" and made the lotus of his heart blossom. Within it he imagined the circles (spheres) of the Sun, Moon and Fire-god duly. There he conceived the eternal Lord Hari in a personified (embodied) form. He conceived the Lord as one wearing yellow robes and holding a conch, discus and iron club. He worshipped the Lord with flowers and dedicated his mind unto him. He meditated on Hari in the form of Brahman and repeated the twelve-syllabled Mantra. The Brāhmaṇa stayed there for three years.

Thereafter the excellent Brāhmaṇa bowed down to Hari, the lord of the universe, the sire of mobile and immobile beings, and meditated on him. Viṣṇu Śarmā eulogized Hari Nārāyaṇa alertly.

Viṣṇu Śarmā said:

79-83. Be pleased, O Lord Viṣṇu; be pleased, O Puruṣottama; be pleased, O lord of the chiefs of Devas; be pleased, O lotus-eyed one. Be victorious, O Kṛṣṇa; be victorious, O inconceivable one; be victorious, O Viṣnu; O immutable one; be victorious, O lord of Yajñas; be victorious, O Lord Viṣṇu; O lord, the all-powerful one.

Be victorious, O infinite one; O dispeller of sins, be victorious; O dispeller of the ailment of births. Obeisance to the lotus-navelled one; obeisance to the lord with lotus garlands; obeisance, O lord of all, O lord of all living beings; obeisance, O slayer of Kaiṭabha; obeisance to the lord of the three worlds; O root of the universe, O lord of the universe. Obeisance to the overlord of Devas; obeisance to Nārāyaṇa. Obeisance to Kṛṣṇa, to Rāma. Obeisance to the lord with the discus as his weapon.

84-87. You are the mother of all the worlds. You alone are the father of the universe. You are the sincere friend of those who are frightened and distressed; you are the father, you are the

grandfather. You are Havis. You are *Vaṣaṭkāra;* you are the master. You are the Fire-god. You alone are the instrument, cause and the creator; you alone are the greatest lord.

O Mādhava, wielding the conch, discus and iron club in the hands, redeem me. Be pleased, O supporter of the Mandara mountain; be pleased, O slayer of Madhu; be pleased, O lover of Kamalā; be pleased, O lord of the worlds.

Agastya said:

88-91. As he eulogized with great devotion in his mind, Viṣṇu, the soul of the universe appeared before that noble-souled (Brāhmaṇa). He was seated on Garuḍa, holding the conch, discus and iron club in his hands and wearing yellow robes.

Acyuta, the immutable one, who was delighted in his mind said to Viṣṇu Śarmā:

Śrī Bhagavān said:

O dear one, I am pleased with your great penance now. O (Brāhmaṇa) of excellent intellect, all your sins have perished now on account of this prayer. Choose your boon, O eminent Brāhmaṇa. I cannot be seen by anyone who has not performed penance.

Viṣṇu Śarmā said:

92-94. I am contented and blessed, O Lord of Devas, with your vision now. O Lord of the universe, grant me unshakeable devotion to you.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

May your steadfast devotion to me be the bestower of salvation. May your Vaiṣṇava devotion to me be firm. Let the river Jāhnavī, the bestower of salvation, be present here itself. O highly fortunate one, this holy spot will become renowned with your name.

Agastya said:

95-98. After saying thus, the Lord of the chiefs of Devas dug that spot with his discus and made the water of Gaṅgā manifest itself from the sphere of the nether worlds.

The Lord, the storehouse of mercy, made the ground free from sin in a trice mercifully, by means of that sacred water. Ever since then, O Brāhmaṇa, that became renowned as Cakratīrtha.[1] That became a splendid Tīrtha destroying mass of sins and renowned in all the three worlds. By taking the holy bath there, and making charitable gifts, one shall go to the world of Viṣṇu.

99. Then Lord Viṣṇu, Acyuta, who is friendly and favourable to Brāhmaṇas, became filled with great compassion and said to Viṣṇu Śarmā:

Śrī Bhagavān said:

100. Let my idol stay here, O Brāhmaṇa, with your name prefixed. It shall be well-known as Viṣṇuhari. It shall be the bestower of salvation.

Agastya said:

101-105. On hearing these words of Vāsudeva the intelligent Brāhmaṇa installed an idol of the Discus-bearing Lord with his own name prefixed. Ever since then, O chief one among Brāhmaṇas, the Lord stationed himself there under the name Viṣṇuhari, holding the conch, discus and iron club in his hands and wearing yellow garments.

The annual festival will begin from the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Kārttika and conclude on the full-moon day. By taking his holy bath in Cakratīrtha a man is liberated from all sins. He is honoured in heaven for many thousands years. If people offer rice-balls, with Pitṛs in view, the Pitṛs shall become contented. They will go to the world of Viṣṇu. There is no doubt about it.

106-109. By taking holy bath in Cakratīrtha and by visiting Lord Viṣṇuhari, one shall get all the sins destroyed and shall be honoured in heaven.

The man who is freed from sins shall make charitable gifts in

1. Cakratīrtha: De 43 records one Cakratīrtha at (1) Kurukṣetra, (2) Prabhāsa, (3) Tryambaka, (4) Vārānasī and (5) Rāmeśvara but none at Ayodhyā. Kane adds Āmelaka-grāma, Kāśmīr, Mathurā, Asthipura (HD IV, 742) but none at Ayodhyā. But the author gives us the details and the importance of the Cakratīrtha at Ayodhyā. As in other places, this Cakratīrtha was created by Viṣṇu's discus.

The annual celebration of this deity takes place from the 10th Tithi to the 15th Tithi (full-moon day) of the bright half of Kārttika.

accordance with his capacity. That intelligent man shall stay in the world of Viṣṇu as long as fourteen Indras reign.

On other occasions too men can take bath in Cakratīrtha. By controlling the sense-organs and seeing Lord Hari but once, one is liberated from all sins.

Thus Hari who is the ocean of all good qualities, whose image must be meditated upon and who is the conscious soul, has stayed there in his great idol for the sake of salvation (of all).

One who worships him with great devotion and takes the holy bath in Cakratīrtha shall dwell in the world of Viṣṇu. He will be an embodiment of meritorious deeds.

CHAPTER TWO

Brahmakuṇḍa and Sahasradhārā

Sūta said:

1. After recounting the story pertaining to Cakratīrtha thus, O excellent Brāhmaṇas, Sage Agastya began to narrate further the story of Lord Viṣṇuhari.

Agastya said:

2. After coming to know that Lord Hari, Acyuta, had become resident of Ayodhyā formerly, Brahmā, the creator of the universe, stationed himself too there.

3. After his arrival there Brahmā duly performed the pilgrimage. And after collecting the different requisites (of a sacrifice) he performed a sacrifice according to the injunctions.

4. Thereafter, Brahmā, the grandfather of the worlds, made a Kuṇḍa known after his name.[1] It was large and frequented by many deities.

5-6. It is a sacred pit that is destructive of sins. It is large; its

1. VV 2-18 describe Brahma-Kuṇḍa. It is to the east of Cakratīrtha. It was created by God Brahmā after performing a sacrifice.

The annual festival at the Kuṇḍa is celebrated on the 14th Tithi of the bright half of Kārttika (vv 16-17).

water is full of ripples. It abounds in lilies, blue lotuses, red lotuses and white lotuses. It is very charming with swans, cranes, ruddy geese and other (water) birds. It is full of various other birds gracefully perching on the branches of the trees on the banks.

7-8. On taking their holy bath in that Kuṇḍa all the Suras became endowed with great purity. All their impurities disappeared and they attained refulgence. On seeing this great miracle all those Suras devoutly bowed down to Brahmā and said thus with palms joined in reverence:

The Devas said:

9-10. O Lotus-seated Lord, recount the entire glory of this Kuṇḍa accurately. It has been dug (by you) and its refulgence is free from impurities. By taking a holy bath herein all our impurities have gone away. We are surprised on observing this miracle, O excellent one among Suras. Hence do recount (it).

Brahmā said:

11-12. May all the Suras listen attentively to the efficacy of this Kuṇḍa along with the different kinds of benefit accruing therefrom. Listen to it, ye Suras who are (obviously) surprised. By taking the holy bath here in accordance with the injunctions even sinful creatures will be clad in fascinating robes. They will occupy an aerial chariot fitted with swans and go to the world of Brahmā. They will stay there till all the living beings are annihilated.

13. (*Corrupt reading*) O excellent suras, acquire merit here by performing charity, Homa, Tulādāna and Aśvamedha according to your capacity.

14-18. By taking the holy bath in this lake of mine, a man becomes glorious. Hence, if holy bath, charitable gifts, Japas etc. are performed here in accordance with the injunctions, they shall be on a par with all Yajñas and be destructive of all sins.

This holy pit shall attain renown of great excellence as Brahmakuṇḍa. I will always be present in this Kuṇḍa.

On the fourteenth day in the bright half of the month of Kārttika, O excellent Suras, the annual festival of mine shall always be celebrated. It is conducive to auspiciousness and is destructive of heaps of great sins.

Gold should be gifted always with various kinds of clothes, O

Suras. Brāhmaṇas should be propitiated in accordance with one's capacity.

Agastya said:

19-20. After saying thus, Brahmā, the lord of Devas, the grandfather of the worlds, glanced at the Tīrtha (once more) and vanished along with the Suras, O ascetic. Ever since then that Kuṇḍa became exceedingly famous on the earth. That great Kuṇḍa is situated to the east of Cakratīrtha.

Sūta said:

21. After saying this, Agastya, the pot-born sage, who had accumulated a mass of penances was asked once again. The great sage thereupon continued to recount the story to Vyāsa.

Agastya said:

22. Listen to the efficacy of another Tīrtha, O highly fortunate one. It is a Tīrtha very difficult of access to persons of evil actions. It is called Ṛṇamocana[1] ('Liberator from indebtedness') and it is adjacent to the banks of Sarayū.

23. O excellent sage, it is situated in the waters of Sarayū seven hundred Dhanus (i.e. about 700 metres) to the north-east of Brahmakuṇḍa.

24. Formerly, the excellent sage named Lomaśa came there during his pilgrimage. He performed the rite of holy bath in accordance with the injunctions.

25. Thereby he became free from indebtedness and got rid of his sins. On observing this great miracle, he gladly spoke to the sages.

26-31. Tears welled up in his eyes. He lifted up his arms and spoke out with great delight:

Lomaśa said:

May (the sages) see the merits of this great Tīrtha, the most

1. VV 22-23 describe Rnamocana Tīrtha. It is to the north-east of Brahmakuṇḍa at a distance of 700 *Dhanus* (1 *Dhanu* = 3 1/2 *Hastas*) but it lies in the waters of Sarayū. The association of the name of Sage Lomaśa adds to the importance of the Tīrtha.

excellent one among all the Tīrthas. This is the most excellent Tīrtha named Ṛṇamocana. By taking the holy bath here living beings will be able to repay all their debts of this world as well as of the world hereafter, the three-fold debt of men. All these perish instantaneously on taking bath in this Tīrtha.

This is the most excellent of all the Tīrthas. It immediately furnishes proof worthy of belief. Its benefit has been perfectly experienced by me. (I have got rid) of my indebtedness. Hence holy bath and charitable gifts must be made here in accordance with one's capacity and in accordance with the injunctions, by persons endowed with faith and desirous of benefits. They must take bath and give away gold, clothes etc. according to (their) capacity.

Agastya said:

32. After mentioning the great efficacy of the Tīrtha thus, Lomaśa, the excellent one among sages, vanished while joyously eulogizing the Tīrtha.

33-35. Thus, O Brāhmaṇas, the Tīrtha named Ṛṇamocana has been described. By taking a holy bath therein the indebtedness of living beings perishes instantaneously. The Tīrtha called Ṛṇamocana is in the water of Sarayū in the East.

Within a distance of twenty Dhanus (1 Dhanu=3½ Hastas) therefrom is the Tīrtha named Pāpamocana[1]. By taking holy bath therein one gets his soul rid of all sins instantaneously. No doubt need be entertained in this respect. O excellent sage, the great glory (of the Tīrtha) has been witnessed by me.

36. There was a Brāhmaṇa in the land of Pāñcāla, named Narahari. As a result of contact with bad people, he became a sinner.

37. On account of his association with sinners he became one who censured the path of Vedas. He committed different kinds of sins such as that of murder of a Brāhmaṇa etc.

38-43. Once he happened to be in contact with some good people engaged in pilgrimage. O Brāhmaṇa, that Brāhmaṇa, the perpetrator of great sins, came to Ayodhyā along with them.

1. VV 33-43 describe Pāpamocana Tīrtha (a Tīrtha absolvent of sins). It is at a distance of 200 Dhanus to the east of Ṛṇamocana Tīrtha. It lies in the current (water) of Sarayū but adjacent to the bank itself. Its annual festival is held on the 14th day in the dark half of Māgha.

Since he was in the company of good people, he took bath in the Tīrtha called Pāpamocana. The mass of his sins perished. He became free from sins in a moment. A shower of flowers fell on his head from heaven, O eminent sage. The Brāhmaṇa rode in a divine aerial chariot and went to the world of Viṣṇu.

After noticing this great miracle, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, the holy bath was specially undertaken by me with great faith. For the sake of dispelling all the sins the holy bath should be particularly undertaken on the fourteenth day in the dark half of the month of Māgha by men. Charitable gift too should be made. (Even) on other occasions, if the bath is performed, all the sins will be dispelled.

44-46. To the east of Pāpamocanatīrtha and about a hundred Dhanus from it there is another excellent Tīrtha named Sahasradhārā.[1] It is destructive of all sins. It was in this, that, at the behest of Rāma, the heroic Lakṣmaṇa, the slayer of enemy warriors, cast off his life by Yogic process and regained his original form of Śeṣa.

They know that the length of a Dhanu is equal to three and a half Hastas. Four Hastas constitute one unit that is called Daṇḍa.

Sūta said:

47. On hearing these words of the Pot-born Sage, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa asked him again out of curiosity.

Vyāsa said:

48. O sage of good excellent holy rites, narrate in detail the greatness of Sahasradhārā. My mind is not fully satiated by listening to the glory of the Tīrtha.

1. VV 44 ff describe the greatness of Sahasradhārā Tīrtha. Sahasradhārā Tīrtha is associated with the end of Lakṣmaṇa's life at Rāma's behest, for disobedience of his order of not admitting anyone during Rāma's conference with Kāla, a story given currency by the author of the Uttara Kāṇḍa—a supplement to Rāmāyaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa was an incarnation of the thousand-hooded serpent Śeṣa. When Śeṣa came up for Lakṣmaṇa's absorption in him, he made one thousand apertures (bores) in the earth (vv 64-65). Hence it is called Sahasradhārā. It lies at a distance of 100 Dhanus to the east of Pāpamocana Tīrtha. It is in the waters of Sarayū and is 25 Dhanus in area. The annual festival of the Tīrtha is celebrated on the 5th day in the bright half of Śrāvaṇa (observed as Nāgapañcamī elsewhere in India). Bath etc. in the month of Vaiśākha is also recommended.

Agastya said:

49. Even as I recount the story, O sage, listen to it with rapt attention. I shall recount the origin of the Tīrtha Sahasradhārā, the story of which is conducive to great prosperity.

50. Formerly, Rāma, the leader of Raghus, completed the task of Devas. The great king met Kāla and began to discuss some matters with him.

51. He made the stipulation: "If anyone comes near us and sees us taking counsel together, he is to be punished by me immediately."

52-53. While they were discussing and Lakṣmaṇa was standing at the entrance, Durvāsas, the great ascetic and storehouse of refulgence, came there. On his arrival, he immediately spoke to Lakṣmaṇa lovingly, as he was famished and agitated.

Durvāsas said:

54. O son of Sumitrā, go quickly and report to Rāma that I am here on a job. It does not behove you to disobey this (request of mine).

Agastya said:

55. As he was afraid of his curse, the son of Sumitrā hurried to their presence. He informed Rāma that Sage Durvāsas, son of Atri, had come and sought an audience with him (Rāma).

56-58 Rāma took leave of Kāla and sent him off. Coming out he met the sage and bowed down to him with great respect. The Lord fed the excellent Sage Durvāsas himself and bade farewell to him. Afraid of violating his own vow, the heroic Rāma abandoned Lakṣmaṇa then.

Lakṣmaṇa, the great warrior, wanted to make the words of his elder brother true. The hero of great intellect came to the banks of Sarayū.

59-61. He went there, took his holy bath, resorted to meditation immediately and fixed his tranquil mind on the Soul of Perfect Consciousness. He stayed there thus.

Thereupon Śeṣa, the excellent Serpent, adorned with a thousand hoods, pierced the ground in a thousand places and appeared before him. Surendra from the world of Suras came there along with the immortal beings. Then, even as the Suras remained there watch-

ing, Śakra spoke these sweet words to Lakṣmaṇa of truthful words, who got merged into Śeṣa.

Indra said:

62-68. O Lakṣmaṇa, get up. Quickly go up to your own position. O heroic slayer of enemies, the task of the Devas has been accomplished by you. Attain the great eternal abode of Viṣṇu. Your own original form, Śeṣa, has come with his graceful hoods.

He pierced the earth in thousand places by means of his thousand hoods. Since they have come up by piercing a thousand holes in the earth, O prince of good holy rites, since the places were burnt (i.e. brightly lit up) by the crest jewels on the thousand hoods of Śeṣa, this splendid Tīrtha on the banks of Sarayū shall become well-known as Sahasradhārā. There is no doubt about it.

The extent of this holy spot is twenty-five Dhanus. By taking holy bath here and giving charitable gifts as well as by performing Śrāddha with sincerity one shall get rid of all sins in his soul and shall go to the world of Viṣṇu.

The man who takes his bath here, intelligently worships Śeṣa, the immutable one, and duly adores the Tīrtha, shall attain the world of Viṣṇu.

Therefore, the rite of taking the holy bath here should be performed in accordance with the injunctions. Brāhmaṇas should be particularly worshipped and meditated upon as serpents in the form of Śeṣa.

69-73. Gold, cooked rice and clothes should be given by persons endowed with sincerity and faith. Holy bath, charitable gift and the worship of Hari—everything shall have infinite (merit). Hence this Tīrtha shall become a great Tīrtha always bestowing all desired objects on the earth. There is no doubt about this.

On the fifth day in the bright half of the month of Śrāvaṇa a grand festival with serpents in view, with the worship of Śeṣa as the main function, should be celebrated with great effort by good people. If the festival is celebrated in that great Tīrtha by men, if Brāhmaṇas are devoutly propitiated along with the worship of serpents, all the serpents will become delighted and will never harass men.

74. Those who take holy bath here with concentration and mental purity in the month of Vaiśākha, will never return to the earth even in hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

75-80. Hence in the month of Vaiśākha, holy bath, charitable gift, worship of Hari and propitiation particularly of Brāhmaṇas should be performed by men with great effort. If these are done by men, the holy spot bestows all desired benefits.

If, with Viṣṇu in view anyone were to give a milch cow along with her calf and befitting ornaments to a deserving Brāhmaṇa in this excellent Tīrtha, his residence shall be in the eternal world of Viṣṇu. By the holy bath in the Tīrtha a man shall enjoy infinite bliss in heaven.

Here in the month of Vaiśākha a Brāhmaṇa couple should be particularly adored with ornaments and clothes, by men endowed with faith, for the purpose of propitiating Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and particularly for the attainment of fortune.

In the month of Vaiśākha, all the Tīrthas situated on the earth join together and stay here. There is no doubt about this. Hence by taking holy bath particularly in the month of Vaiśākha here, one will get the great benefit of taking the holy plunge in all the Tīrthas.

Agastya said:

81-84. After saying this, O eminent sage, Indra installed Śeṣa, i.e. Lakṣmaṇa who got merged into Śeṣa and who was capable of removing the burden of the earth, in that holy Tīrtha. He made Lakṣmaṇa sit in his vehicle and started for heaven.

Ever since then that Tīrtha attained great fame. The glory of the Tīrtha in the month of Vaiśākha is said to be very great, particularly on the fifth day in the bright half of the month of Śrāvaṇa. On other occasions such as Parvan days, one should take special holy bath in Sahasradhārā Tīrtha. The man shall attain heaven.

The intelligent and excellent man who duly performs holy bath and charitable gifts in the Tīrtha in accordance with his capacity, shall become a purified soul. He shall enjoy immense pleasures. By devotion he attains union with Śrīpati who sleeps on the serpent (Śeṣa).

CHAPTER THREE

The Tīrthas: Svargadvāra: Candrahari: Conclusion of Candra Sahasra Vrata

Sūta said:

1-3. On hearing these words of the Pot-born Sage with great respect, the intelligent sage Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana spoke these sweet words:

Vyāsa said:

O holy lord, the glory of this Tīrtha is excellent. On hearing this from you my mind has attained supreme delight. Describe accurately another excellent Tīrtha even as I listen. On listening to you, O sage of good holy rites, my mind is not fully satisfied.

Agastya said:

4. It is always destructive of all sins. Listen, O Brāhmaṇa, I shall describe another excellent Tīrtha well-known as Svargadvāra.[1]

5. There is none who is competent to describe in detail the glory of Svargadvāra. Hence, O dear one of good holy rites, listen to a brief (description).

6-7. According to experts, the knowers of Purāṇas, Svargadvāra has an extent of six hundred thirty-six Dhanus to the east of Sahasradhārā in the waters of Sarayū

8. (I aver it thrice) that it is true, it is the truth. My speech is not untrue. There is no other Tīrtha on a par with Svargadvāra in (the whole of) the sphere of the Cosmic Egg (Brahmāṇḍa-golaka).

9. All the celestial and terrestrial Tīrthas leave off their (respective places) in the morning and gather together and stay there as their resort, O sage of good holy rites.

10. Hence the holy bath here should be particularly taken in the morning by a person who desires to get the benefit of the holy plunge in all the Tīrthas for himself.

1. This Tīrtha is to the east of Sahasradhārā in the waters of Sarayū. It is 636 Dhanus in extent.

11. The living beings that cast off their lives inside Svargadvāra, O Brāhmaṇa, go to the supreme abode of Viṣṇu. There is no doubt about it.

12. See that this is the entrance to salvation. It is conducive to the attainment of heaven by men. Hence this excellent Tīrtha has become famous as Svargadvāra.

13. Svargadvāra is exceedingly difficult of access even to the Devas. There is no doubt about it that whatever a man desires there, he obtains it.

14. The highest achievement lies in Svargadvāra. The highest goal lies in Svargadvāra. The Japa performed, the charitable gift offered, the Homa done, the things seen, the penance performed there and the meditation, the Vedic study, done there—all shall have everlasting benefit.

15. All the sin accumulated during thousands of his previous births perishes (completely) (the very moment) one enters Svargadvāra.

16-22. Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, Śūdras, mixed castes, worms, barbarians, all sorts of inferior classes of men, insects, ants, animals and birds—that attain death in Svargadvāra in due course of time, shall become persons (equipped) with Kaumodakī (the iron-club of Viṣṇu) in their hands. All the birds will become the Garuḍa-emblemed Lords. Men will become Viṣṇus in the splendid city of Viṣṇu.

Whether he has any desire or has no desire at all, if one goes to the Tīrtha Svargadvāra and forsakes his life, he will be honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

Sages, Deities, Siddhas, Sādhyas, Yakṣas, groups of Maruts, those who make divisions in the Tīrtha (Com.) only by means of the sacred thread (?) and the groups of Devas are present here at midday. Hence they consider the midday bath with great respect.

Those who have conquered their sense-organs and observe fast at Svargadvāra and those who observe fast for a month go to the supreme abode.

23. Those who are engaged in giving cooked rice, those who give jewels, those men who gift plots of lands, those who distribute (as gift) cows and clothes to Brāhmaṇas—all these go to the abode of Hari.

24. Siddhas, noble-souled sages, Pitṛs—all these go to heaven through this Tīrtha. Hence this is said to be Svargadvāra ('gate-

way to Heaven').

25. Hari himself, the Lord of Devas who has split his person into four and sports about here (as Rāma), stays happily along with his brothers.

26. The Four-faced eternal Lord, the grandfather of the worlds, has forsaken the world of Brahmā and he sports about here along with Devas.

27. Śiva, the permanent resident of Kailāsa, is also stationed there (at Svargadvāra) itself.

28. A mass of sins as huge as Meru or Mandara (mountain) becomes completely destroyed on reaching Svargadvāra.

29. The goal that is attained through perfect knowledge and penances and the goal that is obtained by the people who perform Yajñas, that auspicious goal is decreed for those who die in Svargadvāra.

30. Svargadvāra is resorted to by multitude of sages, Devas and Asuras, engaged in Japa and Homa and also by ascetics desirous of salvation.

31. If in Kaliyuga anyone stays in the city of Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, even for (a period of) half a wink, he obtains that benefit which is obtained by staying at Kāśī for sixty thousand years.

32. Merely by taking the holy bath in Sarayū on Hari's day (i.e. the eleventh lunar day) one attains that goal which is obtained by those endowed with Yogic practice and those who cast off their lives in Vārāṇasī.

33. No one who dies in Svargadvāra sees hell. Blessed by Keśava all of them attain the greatest goal.

34-38. O excellent Brāhmaṇa, this Tīrtha excels all the Tīrthas (which exist) on the earth, in firmament and in heaven.

If people adopt devotion to Viṣṇu and confidently rejoice therein, if they restrain in accordance with their capacity their lustful ardour for sensual objects, if they gather together all their power and engage themselves in penance, they will never return even in hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

Even if a learned man who stays here is killed with hundreds of weapons, he goes to that great region. After going to that place no one bewails.

If anyone dies in Svargadvāra, he attains the greatest goal. There is no question at all whether the period of death is during the Northern Transit of the Sun or the Southern Transit.

39. All times are auspicious to those who resort to Svargadvāra. Merely by taking bath here sins of embodied beings perish.

40. To all the people on the earth who commit whatever amount of sins with their bodies, Ayodhyā has been mentioned as the greatest abode (for the purpose of removing them).

41. It is laid down by Devas that the annual festival of Lord Candrahari is to be celebrated especially on the fifteenth day in the bright half of the month of Jyeṣṭha.

42. On that day the *Udyāpana* rite (concluding rite) should be performed by those who have observed the holy vow called Candra-sahasra. O Brāhmaṇa, it should be performed with scrupulous care. It is conducive to a benefit that is superior to the benefit of all Yajñas.

43. If that is performed, men will obtain heavenly abode because the great sins perish (thereby).

Śrī Vyāsa requested:

44. O holy lord, recount (to me) accurately the highly auspicious origin of Candrahari and also the procedure of the concluding rite (*Udyāpana*) of the holy vow called *Candravrata*.

Agastya said:

45-47. After bowing down to Viṣṇu, the resident of Ayodhyā, Moon-god, the storehouse of nectar, was eager to witness personally the glory of the Tīrtha. After coming here Moon-god performed the pilgrimage.

Capable of performing different kinds of miraculous acts, he propitiated Viṣṇu in accordance with the injunctions and in the proper order and by means of penance very difficult to perform.

He obtained his (Lord's) favour. He installed Hari with his own name prefixed (as '*Candra-Hari*'). Therefore he (the lord) is known as Candrahari.[1]

48-51. With the favour of Vāsudeva that spot became a miraculous one. Indeed, O sage of good holy rites, that spot of Vāsudeva, the lord of all living beings, became an exceedingly secret (sacred) spot for the purpose of attaining salvation.

In this (holy spot), O Brāhmaṇa, Siddhas have always observed

1. The deity called Candra-Hari was installed by Candra (v 47). Its annual festival is celebrated on the 15th day of the bright half of Jyeṣṭha.

the holy vow of Govinda.

They hold different types of symbols. They are desirous of the world of Viṣṇu. Those (Yogins) who have subdued their sense-organs and are liberated souls, practice the highest type of Yoga (here).

In other places one does not secure as much merit as in this Tīrtha. Charitable gifts, Vratas and Homas—all these shall become infinite in benefit.

52. Living beings always attain their cherished desires and benefits (here). Hence charitable gifts etc., the worship of Brāhmaṇas and particularly of couples, should be performed here by all living beings with great effort and in due order.

53-54. By visiting this, living beings attain all that benefit and the merit which men obtain by visiting all the Deities, by taking the holy bath in all the Tīrthas and by performing all the Yajñas of superior benefits. Hence this is extolled as a great holy spot in Purāṇas etc.

55. The rite of *Udyāpana* should be performed here with the guidance of Brāhmaṇas in the presence of Candrahari. The Vrata is called Candrasahasra Vrata.[1]

56-57. (According to the reckoning of the Lunar months) when two years, six months, five (?) fortnights and two and one-eighth days pass by there is one intercalary month.

When eighty-three years and four months definitely pass there

1. VV 55-83 describe the *Udvāpana* (conclusion) of the *Candra-Sahasra-Vrata*. It is to be done after seeing one thousand full moons i.e. after 83 years and 4 months (v 57).

Though it is called a *Vrata*, it is a *Śānti* The procedure given in this Purāṇa is different from what is current now-a-days. *Vayovasthābhidha-Śānti-Samuccaya* (collection of *śantis*—pacificatory rites at certain stages of life) by Nārāyana Śāstrī Ānjarlekar (K.B. Davale Pub. Bombay) pp. 46-51 give the following procedure for this:

Sahasra-Candra. It is to be performed after the completion of 79 (Lunar) years. The main deity is the Moon to whom 1008 or 108 (or according to one's capacity) ghee oblations are to be offered with the Mantra '*navo navo bhavati*'. The next Adhi-devatā is Tryambaka whom 108 or 28 (or as per one's capacity) ghee oblations are to be offered with the Mantra *tryambakaṁ yajāmahe*; the next deity to be propitiated is Sun-god (Kāla-svarūpa sūrya) to whom 28 or 8 (or as per one's capacity) ghee-oblations are to be offered with the Mantra *ākṛṣṇena*. Lastly the Nakṣatra-devatā, the star or Nakṣatra under which the Yajamāna is born is to be propitiated with 28 or 8 ghee oblations.

will be a thousand Moons.[1] If a man lives up to that age he should celebrate the *Udyāpana* (of this Vrata) and (perform) the pilgrimage with effort.

58. The merit that is declared (as acquired by) performers of continuous sacrifices, by the (life-long) speakers of the truth and donors of gold, that merit is acquired by persons who live (long enough to see a thousand moons).

THE PROCEDURE OF UDYĀPANA

59-64. A meritorious Vrata like that which yields all happiness is described here. On the fourteenth day the devotee should clean his teeth, take his holy bath and remain pure. He should observe restraint in speech, body and mind and take to the vow of celibacy. He should do the same on the full-moon day also and then perform the worship of the Moon.

At the outset the Mothers should be worshipped in the order of Gaurī and others. He should then devoutly worship the Ṛtviks and perform Vṛddhi Śrāddha. The pure devotees should get the replicas of the lunar sphere made. They should be a thousand in number, half of it or one-fourth of it, or in accordance with one's own means it may be still half of it or even one-fourth of it. Thereafter the worship should be performed as one's own faith and means permit.

Or sixteen auspicious replicas should be made carefully. Thereafter he should perform the worship of Moon-god in accordance with the injunctions of the Āgamas. Everyone of the auspicious replicas should be made of sixteen Māṣas (of gold etc.).

65. The Homa should be performed with the Soma Mantras in accordance with one's riches. He should install the images and recite the Soma Mantras.

66. He should read out (the portion of the story narrating) the origin of Soma and recite the Somasūkta carefully. Thereafter he shall perform the worship of Candra (Moon) in accordance with the injunctions of the Āgamas.

67. He should perform the Nyāsa (symbolical assignment of the part of the body to the deity) rite of the Moon and of the Kalās (digits) in the disc of the Moon. Similarly he shall perform the

1. According to calculation of the Solar Year this reconciles the previous statement.

Nyāsa rite of the eleven organs (including organs of sense and of action) duly. There shall be water kept in the mystic diagram.

68-73. The mystic diagram should resemble the lunar disc. It should be made with auspicious rice grains. The *Kalaśa* (Pot) shall be placed in the middle and it should be filled with cow's milk. In the four corners of the square outside, the devotee should place the full Kalaśas.

The worship of the Moon should be performed in the *Maṇḍala* (mystic diagram) in the order of the names:

"Obeisance to Himāṁśu. Obeisance to Somacandra. Obeisance to Candra, to Vidhu always; obeisance to Kumuda-bandhu ('the kinsman of lilies'); obeisance to Soma, to Sudhāṁśu ('Nectar-rayed'); obeisance to Oṣadhīśa ('lord of medicinal herbs'); obeisance to Abja ('born of water'); to Mṛgāṅka ('one marked by the image of a deer'); obeisance to the storehouse of Kalās ('digits'); obeisance to Nakṣatranātha ('lord of the stars'); obeisance to Śarvarīpati ('lord of the night'); to Jaivātṛka ('the long-lived one'); perpetual obeisance to Dvijarāja ('king of the twice-born')".

Thus the Moon should be worshipped by means of the sixteen names in order.

74. Then the pure devotee should duly offer the water of a conchshell along with the requisite Mantra. He should take the conchshell water along with flowers, fruits and sandalpaste.

75-79. "Obeisance to you, O Śaśāṅka ('having the hare for a mark') who are born again and again at the end of every month; do accept my *Arghya* along with Rohiṇī."

After duly worshipping Moon-god, the devotee should bow down to him. Sixteen other *Kalaśas* filled with milk and covered with cloths along with jewels should be given to a Brāhmaṇa for the sake of peace.

Then he should perform the rite of ablution by means of milk and water. The minds of the Ṛtviks should be propitiated in accordance with one's riches. He should feed a Brāhmaṇa, particularly one with a (large) family. A Brāhmaṇa couple should be worshipped then by means of clothes with great care. Thereafter ample and excellent monetary gift should be made.

80-83. The replicas should be given to Brāhmaṇas along with cows, gold, silver, clothes and cooked rice in particular. All these should be gladly given to a Brāhmaṇa for the propitiation of Moon-god.

The intelligent devotee should spend the rest of the day by observing fast. On the next day he should perform the worship of the Lord. He should take food along with kinsmen. He need not observe the restraints further.

If a person performs this excellent *Candra-sahasra-vrata*, even if he is a Brāhmaṇa-slayer, drink-addict, thief, or a defiler of the preceptor's bed, he shall become a purified soul by this Vrata.

The man shall go to the world of the Moon. Whatever he was before, O Brāhmaṇa, he shall become a favourite of Nārāyaṇa. If a man performs the Vrata like this regularly, he shall become blessed and contented.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Greatness of Dharmahari

Agastya said:

1. From the holy spot of Candrahari in the south-eastern direction, there is the deity by name Dharmahari[1] who is the destroyer of the sins of Kali Age.

2. Formerly a Brāhmaṇa named Dharma who was conversant with the principles of the Vedas and Vedāṅgas and who scrupulously adhered to his duties, came here on a pilgrimage.

3. After arriving he conducted an extensive pilgrimage with great respect here. He was surprised on noticing the matchless glory of Ayodhyā.

4. Lifting up his arms, the Brāhmaṇa proclaimed joyously: "Oh! How very beautiful is this Tīrtha! Oh! How excellent is its glory!

5. No other city like Ayodhyā is seen. Being always stationed on the Discus of Viṣṇu, it never touches the earth.

6. As Hari Himself is stationed in it, with which (city) can it be compared? Oh! All the Tīrthas (here) are the bestowers of the

1. This deity is to the south-east of Candra-Hari. It got its name from its founder (installer) Brāhmaṇa Dharma who propitiated Viṣṇu and was allowed to prefix his name to Viṣṇu's idol. Its annual festival is celebrated on the eleventh day of the bright half of Āṣāḍha.

world of Viṣṇu.

7. Oh, Viṣṇu! Oh, Tīrtha! Oh, great city of Ayodhyā! Oh, matchless glory! Which one stationed here is not worthy of praise? Everything hereof is extremely praiseworthy."

8-9. After saying this, Dharma was overwhelmed with rapturous delight and danced there in various ways after observing particularly the glory of Ayodhyā.

On seeing Dharma dancing thus the yellow-robed Lord Hari who became kind and compassionate, manifested himself before him. Dharma bowed down to Hari and eulogized him with great respect.

Dharma said:

10. Obeisance to the Lord residing in the Ocean of Milk. Bow to the Lord lying on a couch (of Śeṣa). Obeisance to Viṣṇu whose divine feet are touched by Śaṅkara.

11. Obeisance to the Lord whose excellent feet are devoutly worshipped. Hail to you, the favourite one of Aja (Brahmā) and others! Repeated obeisance to Mādhava of splendid limbs and excellent eyes.

12. Obeisance to the Lord with lotus-like feet; to the lotus-navelled one; obeisance to the Śārṅga-bearing one whose body is touched by the waves of the Ocean of Milk.

13. Oṁ, salute to the Lord having Yogic Slumber; to the Lord whose Ātman is meditated upon by leading Yogins. Repeated obeisance to the Lord seated on Garuḍa, and to Govinda.

14. Obeisance, obeisance to Śrīdhara who has excellent tresses, nose and forehead; to the discus-bearing Lord who has good robes and good complexion.

15. Obeisance to you with good mighty arms. Bow to you having fascinating shanks. (Hail) to the Lord having good residence and learning; (obeisance) to the exceedingly divine mace-bearing Lord.

16. Obeisance, obeisance to Keśava, the quiescent one, to Vāmana. Obeisance to you fond of Dharma; to the Lord having yellow robes.

Agastya said:

17. On being eulogized thus by Dharma, the liberal-minded

Hṛṣīkeśa, the delighted Lord of Śrī, the Lord of the universe joyously spoke to Dharma, these words:

Śrī Bhagavān said:

18-19. O Dharma of good holy rites, I am delighted by this prayer of yours. O (Brāhmaṇa) conversant with Dharma, choose a boon, whatever appeals to your mind. The man who with alertness eulogizes me by means of this prayer attains all cherished desires. He is worshipped and is always endowed with glory and prosperity.

Dharma said:

20. O Lord, if you are pleased, O Lord of Devas, O Lord of the universe, I shall install you (here) with my name (prefixed), O Sire of the universe.

Agastya said:

21. After saying "Let it be so", the Lord became Dharmahari. Merely by remembering Lord Dharmahari a man becomes liberated.

22. The devotee should take his bath in the waters of Sarayū with his mind full of pious thoughts and witness Lord Dharmahari. He shall then be liberated from all sins.

23. The rites of charitable gifts, Homa, Japa and the feeding of Brāhmaṇas performed here shall become infinite in benefit and are conducive to the attainment of residence in the world of Viṣṇu.

24. In case any evil has been committed knowingly or unknowingly, expiatory rites should be performed scrupulously for dispelling it.

25. By the due performance of the expiatory rite his sin perishes. Hence expiatory rites must be performed here in accordance with the injunctions.

26. If there is any break or omission of the daily routine of religious rites knowingly or unknowingly, or on account of being restrained by the king or others, in case a man is under duress, the expiatory rites should be performed by him with great care.

27. Here Lord Viṣṇu himself resides with great love. Hence the greatness (of this) cannot be described by human beings.

28. On the eleventh day in the bright half of Āṣāḍha, his annual festival is to be celebrated in accordance with the injunctions, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

29. By taking the holy bath in Svargadvāra and by visiting Lord Dharmahari, the devotee shall be rid of all his sins and shall always dwell in the world of Viṣṇu.

30. To the south of this is an excellent mine of gold.[1] It was here that Kubera caused a great downpour of gold because he became afraid of Raghu.

Vyāsa said:

31. O illustrious one, O knower of truth, tell me how the shower of gold took place? Why was Kubera frightened of King Raghu?

32. Narrate all this in detail, O (sage) of good holy rites. By listening to the (holy) tales and (divine) secrets my mind is not satiated.

Agastya said:

33. Listen, O Brāhmaṇa, I shall tell you about the excellent origin of the gold. Hearing about it (i.e. the showering) causes great surprise to people.

34. Formerly there was a king (named) Raghu who caused the race of Ikṣvāku to flourish. He administered the entire world with excellent vigour and prowess of his own arms.

35-40. By means of his exalted prowess he had harassed his enemies who then (sang songs of) praise of his good reputation. As he protected his subjects very well and justly, his spotlessly pure glory spread in all the ten quarters.

By means of his conquests he accumulated a great lot of riches. He invaded different countries with fully equipped four divisions of his army. He won over all living beings and levied taxes and tributes through the threat of punishment.

The heroic king subjugated great kings with power and influence. Then he seized from them different kinds of precious stones.

1. The place where Kubera showered gold for Raghu is called 'Svarṇa-khani'. That is to the south of Dharma-Hari. The story of sage Kautsa and his donor King Raghu is given in vv. 31-71. This generosity of King Raghu is beautifully described by Kālidāsa in *Raghuvaṁśa*.

Powerful that he was, he conquered all the quarters and gathered together heaps of gems. Then the king returned to his splendid capital Ayodhyā.

After his return to his capital city, the descendant of Kakutstha became eager to perform a Yajña. He had the pure and pious idea of performing a good holy rite befitting his family.

41-42. Realizing (his duty), the king, through his well disciplined and excellent Brāhmaṇa (adviser) brought Vasiṣṭha, Vāmadeva, Kaśyapa and other excellent sages who had been living in different holy places.

43. Having learnt that they had arrived and on seeing them all staying like (so many) blazing fires, Raghu, the highly glorious conqueror of the capital towns of enemies, came out (of his palace) duly, as required by the rules of propriety.

44. The humble descendant of Kakutstha uttered the following pious words about his eagerness to perform a Yajña to those excellent Brāhmaṇas.

Raghu said:

45-46. O all ye sages, listen to my words. I wish to perform a Yajña. It behoves you all to accord me permission for the same. O excellent sages, which Yajña will be befitting me now? Ye leading sages, ponder over this and tell me exactly.

The sages said:

47. O king, the Yajña known as *Viśvajit* is the most excellent of all Yajñas. Perform that Yajña with great effort. Do not delay it unnecessarily.

Agastya said:

48-51. Thereupon, the king performed the Yajña called *Viśvadigjaya*. It was very fascinating because of the various requisites that had been gathered together. His entire possessions were offered by him as monetary gifts.

The sages were rendered highly delighted and contented with different kinds of charitable gifts. With great reverence and respect, he gave everything he possessed to the Brāhmaṇas.

When all of them had returned to their abodes after being duly adored, when the kinsmen had been rendered contented and when

the sages were duly bowed to, that king of auspicious conduct instantaneously became resplendent like Devendra in heaven on account of the due performance of that sacrifice.

52. In the meantime, there came a sage known as Kautsa. He was a disciple of Sage Viśvāmitra and was the most excellent one among those who had self-control.

53-54. He came there to sanctify that king (by making him donate money) for the sake of the fee to be given to the preceptor.

The intelligent sage Kautsa came there to respectfully beg (the king) for the (payment of) fee to the preceptor who had angrily told him (Kautsa) thus when he (the preceptor) was repeatedly requested (to specify the fee to be given to him). (Viśvāmitra had said:) "Bring me immediately fourteen crores of gold pieces. That is my fee." Kautsa came there to request Raghu, the ornament of kings, who had (unfortunately) already given his entire wealth as monetary gifts.

55-58. On seeing that he had come, Raghu, the scorcher of enemies, got up promptly and duly worshipped him. During his reception service, he used only earthen pots for the sake of the holy rites.

On seeing the collection of the requisites of such a nature for the worship, the eminent sage was dismayed. Without any joy he abandoned the hopes of getting the amount of fee and yet he spoke sweetly because he was an expert in making appropriate statements.

Kautsa said:

O king, may you be prosperous. I am now going elsewhere for fetching the fee to be given to the preceptor. I do not intend to request you as you have donated everything of yours as religious gift (and yourself) lack in funds. I am, therefore, going elsewhere.

Agastya said:

59. On being told thus by the sage, Raghu, the conqueror of enemies' cities, meditated for a short while. With his palms joined together in reverence and humility, he spoke to him thus:

Raghu said:

60. O holy lord, kindly do stay in my palace for a day. I shall

seriously endeavour for the sake of getting some money for you.

Agastya said:

61. After saying these words of great liberal-mindedness, Raghu of exalted intellect, started with a desire for conquering Kubera.

62. As he was approaching, Kubera made him delighted in mind by conveying his oral message (regarding shower of gold) and offered him an endless downpour of gold.

63-65. The place where the shower of gold occurred is the excellent Svarṇakhani. He pointed out to the sage the mine thus offered by him (Kubera). Raghu dedicated that excellent mine to him. The eminent sage of superior good qualities accepted it, but took only what should be given to the preceptor. Everything else he respectfully returned to the king. The delighted Kautsa, the most excellent one among intelligent persons, granted him boons too.

Kautsa said:

66-68. O king, may you get a very good son possessing all the good qualities of your own family. This Svarṇakhani shall immediately bestow the desired benefits on you.

There will be a great Tīrtha here. It shall always dispel all sins. By taking holy bath here and making charitable gifts men shall obtain fortune and glory.

It is to be remembered that the annual festival should be celebrated on the twelfth day in the bright half of the month of Vaiśākha. At my instance, men will obtain all the different things desired by them.

Agastya said:

69-71. After granting boons thus to the king, Kautsa who was delighted in his mind, set off for his own task towards the hermitage of his preceptor eagerly.

The contented king took the remaining amount. He gave gifts unto Brāhmaṇas duly and protected the subjects.

Thus the Svarṇakhani became celebrated on account of the eminent sage (Kautsa).

CHAPTER FIVE

The Efficacy of Tilodakī

Vyāsa said:

1-2. O holy lord, tell me exactly how (and why) Sage Viśvāmitra, on being repeatedly requested and pressed, angrily asked his own disciple Kautsa to bring such a huge amount that was very difficult to get even with the greatest endeavour. If you have any kindness for me, narrate to me the entire episode.[1]

Agastya said:

3-9. O Brāhmaṇa, listen with the concentration of all sense-organs on this story.

Once Viśvāmitra, the most excellent of all sages, endowed with the divine vision born of knowledge, performed a very difficult penance. He observed Vratas with great purity. Once Sage Durvāsas came there to see him. On arrival that Brāhmaṇa (Durvāsas) who was afflicted with hunger cried loudly: "I am thoroughly afflicted with hunger. Let food be served to me. I am famished; give me quickly hot pudding of pure milk, O Brāhmaṇa."

On hearing these words, Viśvāmitra immediately (prepared the pudding) with great effort. He took the pudding in a pot and was about to give it to Durvāsas. On seeing him rising, holding the pudding in his hand, Durvāsas who was given to play his characteristic (pranks), spoke these sweet words to the sage:

"O eminent Brāhmaṇa, wait for a moment so that I shall take my bath and return. Stay for a moment; stay, do stay. I shall come presently."

After saying this, Durvāsas went away to his hermitage then.

10-14. Viśvāmitra, the ascetic, remained motionless like a mountain for a thousand years in accordance with the divine reckoning. He stood there steadfast in mind.

Sage Kautsa devoted to holy rites remained there serving him. He was of great liberal mind, free from jealousy. Durvāsas devoid of sins came back once again, consumed the milk pudding and

1. VV 1-18 describe why Viśvāmitra demanded such an exorbitant Dakṣiṇā from his favourite pupil Kautsa.

went away to his own hermitage.

When that excellent sage had gone, Viśvāmitra, the storehouse of penance, discharged Kautsa, the most excellent one among the learned, and permitted him to go home (to take to the householder's life).

On being discharged, he said to the preceptor, "Let the fee be asked for." Viśvāmitra said to him: "What fee will you give? Your service itself is my fee. Go back to your house, O sage devoted to holy rites."

15-18. The disciple said this again and again to the preceptor and repeatedly pressed him. Then the preceptor became exceedingly furious and spoke these harsh words to the disciple:

"Bring me fourteen crores of gold pieces of excellent colour as my fee, O Brāhmaṇa, and go home thereafter."

On being told thus by his preceptor, Kautsa pondered over it and approached the descendant of Kakutstha, the conqueror of the quarters. He requested him for the preceptor's fee.

Thus, O excellent sage, what has been asked by you has been recounted.

Once again, listen to another Tīrtha, the excellent cause (of welfare).

19-23. To the south of this holy spot is the confluence that is resorted to by Siddhas. It is well-known on the earth due to the confluence of Tilodakī and Sarayū.[1]

By taking a holy bath there, O highly fortunate one, men become free from sins. A righteous-souled one, devoted to holy rites, should, by taking the holy bath there, attain that benefit which is obtained if ten horse-sacrifices are performed.

He who gives gold etc. to a Brāhmaṇa who has mastered the Vedas obtains the auspicious goal. He shines like fire.

By giving cooked rice in accordance with the injunctions at the confluence of Tilodakī and Sarayū, that is well-known in the worlds, one is not reborn.

One who observes fast and propitiates Brāhmaṇas obtains the fruit of Sautrāmaṇi Yajña.

24. If a person stays there for a month while regularly performing holy rites and taking a single meal per day, all the sins

1. VV 19-29 describe the greatness of the confluence of Sarayū and Tilodakī—a river created by Rāma for horses from Sindhu (v 26). The confluence is to the south of Svarṇa-khani. Its annual festival is celebrated on the new-moon day of Bhādrapada.

committed by him throughout his life shall perish instantaneously.

25-28. On the new-moon day, in the month of Nabhasya (Bhādrapada) the annual festival is to be celebrated. Formerly this river was created by Rāma, as if it is another Sindhu. O sage of good holy rites, it was intended for the drinking purposes of the horses from Sindhu territory. Since the water therein shines always dark like gingelly seeds, it has come to be famous as Tilodakī. This river is of meritorious water always. If a person takes his holy bath in Tilodakī anywhere other than at the confluence, he is liberated from sins accruing in the course of seven births.

Hence the bath in the Tilodakī is destructive of all sins, O sage. It should be carefully undertaken by all living beings desirous of piety. Bath, gifts, Vrata and Homa here shall have infinite merit.

29. A person who performs pilgrimage in accordance with the different injunctions and acquires merit shall go to the greatest abode. His good qualities will develop gradually. He should worship Hari in all the Tīrthas with dedicated feelings. Somehow he shall get rid of all his sins.

CHAPTER SIX

The Greatness of Svargadvāra and Gopratāra

Agastya said:

1-2. To the west of that confluence (of Sarayū and Tilodakī) is situated the holy pit called Sītā Kuṇḍa.[1] It is well-known as the bestower of all desired benefits, O Brāhmaṇa. By taking his holy bath there, O Brāhmaṇa, a man is absolved of all sins. That Kuṇḍa is made by Sītā herself. By the boons granted by Rāma it has been rendered highly meritorious.

Śrī Rāma said:

3-7. Listen, O Sītā, I shall tell you, of what nature the glory of your Kuṇḍa shall be. O lady of great felicity, I shall mention it out of pleasure for you. A holy bath, charitable gifts, Japa,

1. VV 1-9 describe the importance of Sītā Kuṇḍa. It is to the west of the confluence of Sarayū and Tilodakī. Its annual festival is celebrated on the 14th day in the dark half of Mārgaśīrṣa.

Homa and penance—all these performed here in accordance with the injunctions will be infinite in merit, O lady of pure smiles. Particularly, a holy bath on the fourteenth day in the dark half of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is always destructive of all sins of all those who take the holy bath.

This was the boon granted to Sītā by Rāma who was fond of his subjects.

Ever since then that Kuṇḍa became well-known on the earth as Sītākuṇḍa. It causes great wonder to the people. By taking holy bath in that Kuṇḍa a man shall certainly attain Rāma.

8-9. If one takes the holy bath, makes charitable gifts and particularly performs penance, if he worships Rāma and Sītā with scents, garlands, incense, lights and different kinds of elaborate and luxurious offerings and services, he shall become liberated. There is no doubt about this.

The holy bath must be performed in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. Thereby one will no longer stay within any womb (i.e. will be liberated). If a man takes the holy bath at any other time, he goes to the world of Viṣṇu.

10. To the west of (the spot of) Lord Viṣṇuhari,[1] O Brāhmaṇa, is the Lord named Cakrahari, the bestower of all desired benefits.

11. The great power of that Cakrahari cannot be described by men, even by the most intelligent and skilful among them, O Brāhmaṇa.

12. To the west thereof is the meritorious shrine of Viṣṇu well-known by the name Harismṛti. It is the bestower of the best fruit in the form of salvation. Merely by the sight of that Lord one is liberated from all sins.

13. By seeing these two all the sins of embodied beings—all the sins which men commit on the earth, perish.

14. Formerly,[2] when an exceedingly terrible battle was fought between Devas and Asuras, the former were vanquished by the

1. The deities in this Māhātmya always have the suffix Hari. VV 10-11 mention Cakra-Hari as situated to the west of Viṣṇu-Hari.

2. VV 14-56 explain why the deity came to be called Gupta-Hari. As usual the scenario of the defeat of Devas, Viṣṇu's prayer etc. is given here. As Viṣṇu secretly performed a penance at Ayodhyā for Devas, the deity became known a "Gupta-Hari" (v 44) and the place where Viṣṇu's discus Sudarśana rested was called Cakra-Hari (v 45). The annual festival is celebrated on the 11th day of the bright half of Mārgaśīrṣa.

latter who were puffed up with pride on account of their attainment of boons.

15-23. As the Devas fled, their leader Hara stopped them all. Keeping the Lotus-seated Lord at the head all of them sought refuge in Viṣṇu who lay in the Ocean of Milk on his couch of Śeṣa. Lakṣmī was seated at his side with her hands (stroking) the Lord's lotus-like feet.

The great good qualities of the Lord were being praised by excellent sages including Nārada. He was eulogized uninterruptedly by Garuḍa who stood in front of him with palms joined in reverence.

His robes were marked by the waves of the Milk Ocean as though with drops of ichor (?) He shone with a large garland of stars appearing like a garland of pearls.

He wore yellow robes. He was full of smiles and appeared resplendent with the manifestation of his kindly nature. He had large ear-rings in his ears refulgent with pearls.

He appeared to have round him a bright creeper studded with jewels growing in the Śvetadvīpa. He had on (his head) a crown with rings of rubies.

He wore (on his chest) a halo of refulgence along with that of the Kaustubha that dispelled the fear of the Sun-god that there was another Rāhu. It was dark-red in colour. Thereby it appeared as though he contemplated on the production of another Four-faced Lord.

With humility in his mind (Śiva) sought refuge in him and eulogized him. At that time, with all purity (of mind), Śaṁbhu in the company of all the groups of Devas eulogized Viṣṇu, the conqueror of the enemies of Suras.

Īśvara said:

24. O Lord, you take (devotees) across the ocean of worldly existence; obeisance to you, the Lord who give happiness to Suparṇa (Garuḍa). Obeisance to Hari, the moon that dispels the intense darkness of delusion.

25. I resort to the sparkling lustre of the jewel of perfect knowledge, the moonlight associated with the mind, the river that flows in the garden of the mind full of devotion to the Lord.

26. (I resort to) the power of enthusiasm that shines playfully, that pervades through all the three worlds and that is the initial

stage of all living beings and animals. It is the Vaiṣṇavī power.

27. To the creatures that are about to fall—the creatures that stay at the border as it were of the petals of the lotus tossed about by wind, the sole cause of stability is Harismṛti ('Remembrance of Hari').

28. Obeisance to you of the nature of the Sun-god having the cluster of rays of perfect knowledge. Obeisance to the Lord that causes opening of the glorious lotus of heart.

29. Obeisance to that perpetual goal of Yogins, to the Lord of restraints. Obeisance to the great Lord who is beyond the lustre and darkness.

30. Obeisance to Yajña; to the Lord who partakes of Havis; to the Lord of the form of Ṛk, Yajus and Sāman. Obeisance to the Lord who possesses divine good qualities praised by Sarasvatī.

31. Obeisance to the quiescent one; to the storehouse of Dharma. Bow to the Kṣetrajña (Soul) of the nature of nectar. Salute to the Lord who has established the path of Yoga among disciples. Bow to the sole cause of Jīvas (individual souls); obeisance to the terrible maker of Māyā; obeisance to one with a thousand heads.

32. Obeisance to the Ātman engaged in Yogic slumber. Salute to the Lord from whose navel the lotus (the seat) of the Creator of the universe has originated; obeisance to one (who is) the cause in the form of water, and (who is the cause) of the sustenance of the universe.

33. Obeisance to the powerful one who can be inferred only through the effects; obeisance to the Jīva, to the Supreme Ātman; to the protector of all living beings; to the vital air of living beings; obeisance to the universe, to the creator.

34. Obeisance to the Lord in the physical form of the proud lion; to the cause of the annihilation of Daityas; salute to the Lord favourable to heroes; to the Lord of infinitely deep mind; obeisance to the Lord adopting the form of the universe.

35-37. Obeisance to the Lord who cuts off (and dispels) the great darkness of ignorance (which is) the cause of the worldly existence; salute to the Lord of unimaginable refulgence; to the Lord occupying the cave (of the heart); to Rudra. Obeisance to the great reviver.

Obeisance to the quiescent one; to the bestower of salvation wherein the billows (mental disturbances) have quietened down; obeisance to one who is apart and distinct from all other living

beings; obeisance to the Ātman identical with everything.

I bow down to Viṣṇu who is dark-complexioned like a blue lotus, who has the graceful charm of the refulgent filament, who wears the Kaustubha jewel and who is elixir unto the eyes.

Agastya said:

38. On being eulogized thus, the Garuḍa-emblemed Lord, the bestower of boons, became delighted in his mind. The compassionate Lord showered his nectarine glances on all the Devas. He spoke these sweet words to the Suras who bowed down their heads with great humility.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

39. O Devas, I know everything that you think by means of meditation. I know that your region has been attacked with violent force by the Daityas who are proud (of their ability) to fight.

40. The valour of those deficient in strength has been subdued by the enemies of greater strength and power. Now I shall perform penance for the purpose of getting you more strength.

41. I shall go to the city of Ayodhyā and perform an excellent penance. I shall remain unmanifest there and perform the penance in order to increase your refulgence and to suppress the Daityas.

42. With minds devoid of impurities, you too do perform severe penance after going to Ayodhyā quickly. O Devas, perform the penance for the destruction of the Daityas.

Agastya said:

43. After saying this to the Devas, the Garuḍa-vehicled Lord vanished. He arrived at Ayodhyā immediately and performed the excellent penance.

44. Since he performed the penance after becoming hidden, for the purpose of increasing the refulgence of Suras, the Lord became famous by the name Guptahari.

45. (The Lord) at the place where at the outset the Discus named Sudarśana fell down from the hand of Hari who arrived there is known as Cakrahari.

46-47. Merely by visiting these two one is liberated from all sins.

By the power of Hari Devas became exceedingly refulgent.

They defeated all the Daityas in battle and regained their own original positions. They assailed the Asuras and became brilliant with excessive pleasure.

48. Then all of them gathered together immediately. With Bṛhaspati at their head, all the Devas eagerly came to Ayodhyā to visit Hari. They bowed down to Hari whose lotus-like feet were adored with the garlands from their crowns.

49-50. They arrived and listened respectfully to the different good qualities (of the Lord that were praised in songs). They worshipped him with meritorious feelings (of devotion). They bowed down to Hari with hands folded respectfully and meditated on him with full concentration of mind.

They stood there with palms joined in reverence. On seeing them arrive and bow down, the yellow-robed Janārdana, the immanent soul of the universe, became delighted and said:

Śrī Bhagavān said:

51. O Devas, after a long time you have come within the range of my vision. What wish of yours, O Suras, shall I fulfil now. Tell me quickly; O fearless ones, why do you delay?

The Devas said:

52-57. O Lord, O Lord of the chiefs of Devas, O Lord of the universe, all the tasks have become fulfilled on account of you now. Yet, O Lord, you must be here always for the sake of our protection. You should be present here itself, in the manner of one who has conquered the sense-organs. In the very same way you must bring about destruction of partisans of the enemy.

Śrī Bhagavān said:

Thus I shall bring about the conquest over your enemies. O Suras, I shall enhance your refulgence forever. This story shall attain excellent renown. This Lord shall become well-known all over the worlds by the name Guptahari. My place of concealment will become famous.

A most excellent one among living beings who very devoutly performs worship, Yajña, Japa etc. here, attains the greatest goal.

58-62. A person who has conquered his sense-organs and who makes charitable gifts according to his capacity, attains matchless

position in heaven. He will never be grief-stricken.

O Devas, in order to please me, a cow and her calf should be carefully given away in this place in accordance with the injunctions by all living beings desirous of merit. The cow should have gold caps on its horns and silver (covering) on the hoops. A pair of cloth coverings should be given (along with the cow). A milking vessel made of bell metal should be given. The cow should be of red-coloured back and should possess many good features. Jewels must be tied to the tail. The cow should be one still yielding milk. She must be adorned with bells and ornaments and be worshipped with scents, flowers etc. She must be gay by nature. No progeny of her should have been dead. The cow should be given to a Brāhmaṇa well conversant with the Vedas, endowed with all good qualities, and of a soul free from impurities. He should be a learned devotee of Viṣṇu and be very kind-hearted.

63-69. The cow should be given to a Brāhmaṇa of the above description. The donor gets happiness everywhere. She should not be given to a mere Brāhmaṇa by caste (devoid of these qualities). He may cause the downfall of the donor.

In order to propitiate me, she shall be given here with a conscience free from impurities.

Those who take holy bath for the sake of purity in this place, those who are engaged in devotional activities for me, will find salvation within their reach (as if on their palm). They will have heavenly goal forever.

For the sake of propitiating me, excellent charitable gift should be made at the pedestal of Cakrahari. Japa, Homa etc. should be scrupulously performed by men. All of you, O excellent ones, celebrate the festival too in accordance with the injunctions.

Very near this spot of Guptahari, there is the splendid confluence. It is three Yojanas (3×12=36 Kms.) from Gopratāra to the west. It is there that Sarayū joins the waters of the river Gharghara (mod. Ghāgrā or Gogrā).

After taking a holy bath here in accordance with the injunctions the Lord should be visited enthusiastically, the Lord named Guptahari, the bestower of all desired objects.

Agastya said:

70-74. After saying this, the yellow-robed Acyuta, the Lord vanished. The Devas celebrated the festival in accordance with the

injunctions with great care. Fascinated by the excellent qualities of Hari they permanently settled at Ayodhyā.

Ever since then, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, that holy spot became well-known all over the earth. There shall be a special annual festival on the Kārttikī (full-moon day in the month of Kārttika) for Lord Guptahari after a regular holy bath at the confluence.

After taking bath at this Tīrtha, i.e. Gopratāra, which is on (the confluence of Sarayū and Gharghārā, the Lord should be worshipped. He is the bestower of all desired benefits.

The annual festival of Cakrahari should be scrupulously performed by men on the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. He who celebrates this festival rejoices in the world of Viṣṇu.

Śrī Sūta said:

75. When the Pot-born Sage stopped after telling this, Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana, said again with surprise.

Vyāsa said:[1]

76-77. O Brāhmaṇa, O ascetic, you have narrated this exceedingly wonderful story whereby my mind has become full of surprise. Tell me in detail the greatness of this.

Agastya said:

78. Listen, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, to the glory of the confluence. It is highly surprising. It has been heard by me from Lord Skanda. I shall recount it to you correctly.

79. I have learnt from Skanda that there are thousands and hundreds of crores of Tīrthas at the confluence of Sarayū and Gharghārā.

80. There is perpetual presence of the deities, Suras, Siddhas and Yogins as well as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

81-85. O Brāhmaṇa, listen with single-minded attention. I shall tell you the benefit that one attains by taking the holy bath with

1. VV 76-116 describe the glory of *Gopratāraka Tīrtha* which is located on the confluence of Sarayū and Gharghārā or modern Ghāgrā (v 72). Its special month of bath is Pauṣa. The special historical (?) importance is that at the behest of Rāma, all the citizens of Ayodhyā drowned themselves in waters here and went to heaven (v 116).

mental purity in the waters of that confluence, by offering libations to Pitṛs and Devas, by making charitable gifts in accordance with one's capacity and by performing Homas with the Vaiṣṇava Mantras.

He will have the same benefit as one gets through a thousand horse-sacrifices and a hundred Vājapeyas or the same merit as one gets by making gifts of gold everyday or by performing holy rites in the great holy place of Kurukṣetra when the Sun is swallowed by Rāhu (i.e. at the time of a solar eclipse).

The holy bath taken on the new-moon day, full-moon day, on both the twelfth days, on the day of Ayana and during Vyatīpāta, yields the benefit of attaining the world of Viṣṇu.

86. If a person stands on a single foot for a thousand Yugas (and performs penance) and if a person duly takes his holy bath in the confluence on the full-moon day in the month of Pauṣa, the benefit of both is equal.

87. If a man hangs (himself) upside down for ten thousand Yugas (for performing penance), (he gets the same benefit as) those who purify their souls by means of the pure waters at the confluence.

88. The benefit derived by those who take their holy bath in the confluence cannot be attained by men even by means of hundreds of sacrifices.

89. Particularly the holy bath taken in the month of Pauṣa yields much benefit.

90. Whoever takes the special holy bath in the month of Pauṣa with great faith—whether he is a Brāhmaṇa, a Kṣatriya, a Vaiśya, a Śūdra or a man of mixed caste, he goes to the abode of Brahmā with no possibility of returning to the earth.

91. O Brāhmaṇa, listen to the benefit of that person who faithfully and duly offers an excellent lamp fed with ghee in the month of Pauṣa.

92. The sin acquired by him in the course of different births, whether small or big, shall perish entirely like salt dropped in water.

93. One who offers light (lamps) attains excellent happiness and benefit, long life, health, prosperity, progeny etc. (and is endowed with merits).

94-95. One who undertakes Vratas here with great purity on the thirteenth day in the bright half of the month of Pauṣa, a wise man

who performs Jāgara (i.e. keeps awake at night) shall go to the abode of Hari. A Brāhmaṇa who, while keeping awake at night, has subdued his sense-organs and has undertaken pious observances should perform Homa after offering light.

96. A devotee of Viṣṇu should keep awake performing the worship of Viṣṇu, listening to the story of Hari, presenting vocal and instrumental music and dances causing pleasure to Viṣṇu or (listening to or narrating) meritorious stories and anecdotes of Viṣṇu.

97. When the day dawns with bright light, he should duly take bath with great reverence and worship Viṣṇu and Brāhmaṇas. Gold etc. should be given in accordance with his capacity (to Brāhmaṇas).

98. The learned devotee equipped with faith, who gives gold, cooked rice and clothes at the confluence duly attains the greatest goal (i.e. Mokṣa).

99. The rite of Jāgara should be performed every year by persons engaged in meritorious rites.

100-101. Hari should be worshipped. Brāhmaṇas should be well-propitiated by men in accordance with their capacity. Thereby Viṣṇu will be delighted much. All the sins will be dispelled and rendered ineffective like serpents becoming bereft of poison at the sight of Garuḍa. One who takes bath there goes to heaven. One who takes bath here shall become happy.

102. All the living beings in the three worlds, on being propitiated, attain the greatest delight by means of the waters of the confluence.

103. To all living beings tormented by miseries and seeking relief, there is no other goal on a par with the confluence.

104. One who takes the holy bath in the confluence redeems himself, seven generations succeeding and seven preceding him.

105. Those who do not come here and take bath in the confluence of Sarayū and Gharghara are similar to those who are born blind and those who are lame.

106. Among Tīrthas the confluence is (the highest) like Brāhmaṇas among the different castes. In contact with the confluence of Sarayū and Gharghara, a man is always like one who is a resident of Vaikuṇṭha.

107. A man who has subdued his sense-organs will attain heaven by taking a holy bath, by making charitable gifts according to his

(financial) capacity, and by a Homa performed duly (as per injunction) here (at the confluence).

108. Whether the devotee is a man or a woman, he or she should duly take the holy bath. Undoubtedly the benefit shall be residence in the heavenly world.

109. Just as fire burns everything, whether dry or wet, so also the holy plunge in that confluence reduces all sorts of sins to ash.

110. If all the Tīrthas and the benefits of all kinds of sacred pursuits are placed in one (pan) and (the benefits from) the confluence of Sarayū and Gharghara (on the other), the latter will be found to be heavier.

111. By taking the holy plunge in the confluence men will derive such benefit as is proclaimed in the Śrutis as the benefit of taking the holy bath in all the Tīrthas.

112. O sinless one, there is another Tīrtha named Gopratāra near the confluence itself. It is destructive of great sins.

113. There has never been nor will there ever be a Tīrtha on a par with Gopratāra. By taking the holy plunge therein and by making charitable gifts no man shall ever be grief-stricken.

114-115. Just as Maṇikarṇikā at Vārāṇasī, O learned one, or the shrine of Mahākāla at Ujjayinī, O Brāhmaṇa, or Cakravāpī at Naimiṣa are proclaimed as the holiest of Tīrthas, so also, O Brāhmaṇa, the Tīrtha named Gopratāra is a great Tīrtha at Ayodhyā.

116. It was here, O learned one, that at the bidding of Rāma, all the people of the city Sāketa (Ayodhyā) drowned themselves in the great waters and attained the matchless bliss of heaven.

Vyāsa enquired:

117. How did the citizens of Sāketa attain heaven? How did Rāma go to heaven, O learned one? O sage of good holy rites, narrate this.

Agastya replied:

118. Listen, O sage, with attention to this detailed narrative as to how Rāma and the citizens went to heaven.[1]

1. VV 118-161 describe how Rāma, after instructing his closest associates like Hanumān and Vibhīṣaṇa, entered Sarayū finally. This Tīrtha naturally came to be known as Svargadvāra ('Gateway to Heaven').

119. Formerly Rāma completed the task of Devas with great care. Then Rāma of heroic intelligence decided to go to heaven along with two of his brothers (i.e. Bharata and Śatrughna).

120. Through spies the monkeys who could assume any form they wished, heard about it. Many kinds of monkeys, the Ṛkṣas, Gopucchas and Rakṣas came jumping.

121. These monkeys were the children of Devas, Gandharvas and sages. Coming to know about (the imminent) passing away of Rāma, all those monkeys arrived there.

122-123.They approached Rāma. All the leaders of the herds of monkeys said: "O sinless king, we have all come here to follow you. O Rāma, the great ruler of men, if you go without us, it will be as though we are struck dead with a huge stick, O king."

124. On hearing the words of those bears, monkeys and demons, Rāghava instantaneously spoke these words to Vibhīṣaṇa:

125-126. "As long as there are subjects alive (i.e. to the end of the world), O Vibhīṣaṇa, rule the great kingdom. You will protect Laṅkā. Rule your kingdom. Do not make my words otherwise. (Do not disobey me.) Protect your subjects righteously. It does not behove you to tell me anything subsequently (against my behest)."

127-130a. After saying this, the descendant of Kakutstha said to Hanumān: "O son of Wind-god, live long. Do not belie (your) vow. As long as the people recount my story, O great monkey, you do sustain your life keeping up your vow. Mainda and Dvivida had both of them partaken of nectar. As long as the worlds hold on, they too will live. May these monkeys protect our sons and grandsons here."

130bc. After saying this Rāghava, the descendant of Kakutstha, spoke thus to all (the other) monkeys: "You do come along with me."

131. When the night dawned, Rāma of broad chest, great arms and eyes like the petals of a lotus, spoke to his priest:

132. "Let all the (sacred fires of) Agnihotra sacrifices go ahead shining brilliantly. Let the Vājapeyas and the Atirātras go ahead of me."

133. Then the brilliant Vasiṣṭha inwardly decided everything and duly arranged for all the rites of the Great Departure (*Mahāprasthāna*).

134. Then the king clad in silken robes, who had adopted the vow of celibacy, taking Darbha grass in his hands, prepared him-

self for the Great Departure.

135-136. The king uttered no auspicious or inauspicious words. Like the moon coming out of the ocean he came out of the city. Śrī with a lotus was on the left side of the king, while the large-eyed Hari accompanied him on the right side. Vyavasāya (Enterprise) went ahead.

137. Different kinds of weapons beginning with the bow, the bowstring etc. followed Kākutstha (Rāma). All of them had human forms.

138. In the form of a Brāhmaṇa, the Veda went behind Rāma on the left side and Sāvitrī on the right side. Oṁkāra and Vaṣaṭkāra too followed Rāma.

139. The noble-souled sages and all the Mountains followed Rāma who had reached Svargadvāra.

140. All the women of the inner apartment followed the descendant of Kakutstha, including old ladies, children, slaves, attendants and sentries.

141. Accompanied by the women of their inner apartment, Bharata with Śatrughna also proceeded along with him. Following Rāma who went ahead the entire race of Raghu proceeded ahead.

142. Thereafter the noble-souled Brāhmaṇas with the Agnihotra sacrifices all round and accompanied by their wives and sons followed Kākutstha.

143. The ministers with their servants, sons and kinsmen, all of them with their followers, went after Rāghava.

144. Then all the members of the administration, of graceful manners and good qualities and surrounded by delighted and well-nourished people followed Rāma as he proceeded ahead.

145-146. All the subjects along with their sons and kinsmen became the followers of Rāghava. After seeing him devoid of sins, they were clad in white clothes after their bath. All of them were of controlled minds. They followed Rāghava making tumultuous sounds expressive of joy.

147. No one was distressed or dejected, frightened or miserable. All of them were very delighted and gay and very much wonderstruck.

148-150. The bears, monkeys and the Rākṣasas, the people of the city and those residing in outlying rural districts were eager to witness the Nirvāṇa ('Passing-away') of the king. They saw him going by the aerial path. After their arrival, they followed him

with great devotion. Those living beings in the city that had already vanished from sight, followed Rāghava who arrived at Svargadvāra.

151. All those living beings, whether mobile or immobile, that saw Kākutstha, became inclined to go to heaven.

152. There was no living being, even the subtlest one in Ayodhyā, which did not follow Rāghava who had reached Svargadvāra.

153. After going half a Yojana, Rāma proceeded ahead facing the West. He saw the river Sarayū of meritorious waters.

154. At that auspicious hour, Brahmā, the grandfather of the worlds, came there to Kākutstha who had approached Svargadvāra. He (Brahmā) was accompanied by all the Devas and noble-souled sages.

155-158. All round him there were hundreds and crores of divine aerial chariots that brightened the firmament. There was an excellent fiery brilliance due to the self-luminous great persons of meritorious activities.

Auspicious, sweet-smelling and pleasant breezes blew. There was a splendid shower of flowers along with a gust of wind of great velocity. At that time Sun-god also came along with Gandharvas and Apsarās. Rāma touched the waters of Sarayū with his feet. Thereafter Brahmā began to eulogize along with the Devas.

159-163. "Indeed you are the lord of the worlds. No one knows you. But I am, O wide-eyed lord, one who has been accepted by you before. You are the great Being unimaginable and everlasting. O lord of great vigour, enter that body of yours which you have wished to adopt for the purpose of sustaining the worlds."

At the instance of the grandfather of the worlds, the lord, along with his younger brothers, entered the exceedingly divine fiery world of Viṣṇu.

Thereafter the Devas worshipped the excellent one among the Devas, adopting the form of Viṣṇu.

Sādhyas, the groups of Maruts along with Indra with Agni as their leader, the celestial groups of sages, Gandharvas, celestial damsels, Suparṇas, Nāgas, Yakṣas, Daityas, Dānavas and Rākṣasas—all of them realized their desires completely. Devas were highly delighted. All of them stationed in heaven exclaimed, "Excellent! Excellent!"

164-170a. Then Viṣṇu of great refulgence spoke to Brahmā[1]: "O

1. VV 164-175 describe the creation of a special heaven called Śantānika for the people, monkeys etc. who followed Rāma in the Sarayū waters.

lord of good holy rites, it behoves you to give a (separate) world to these crowds of people. All these men have come here because of their affection for me. They are devotees full of sincere love. They have abandoned themselves completely."

On hearing this utterance of Viṣṇu, the lord of all the worlds (Brahmā) spoke: "These men will occupy the world named Santānika. He who meditates on Rāma alone devoutly and abandons his life in this Tīrtha of Svargadvāra, shall attain the great world of Santāna which is beyond the world of Brahmā.

The monkeys will attain the source of their origin. The Rākṣasas will reoccupy the Rākṣasa form. All of them who were born of the bodies of Suras and Asuras will regain the same i.e. the bodies from which they originated. Sugrīva, the son of Sun-god, will attain the solar disc. The sages, the Nāgas and the Yakṣas will go back to their origin."

170b-176. When the lord of Devas said thus, the waters of Gopratāra reached Sarayū. All the places were filled with water completely. All of them plunged into the waters joyously and cast off their lives.

Men abandoned their human bodies and got into aerial chariots. The beings of lower strata of animals entered Sarayū, abandoned their bodies and assumed divine bodies. So also, in the case of other beings, both mobile and immobile. After attaining excellent bodies, they came to the world of Devas.

When that had been achieved, the monkeys, the bears and the Rākṣasas cast off their bodies and entered (the celestial world).

Remembering the Lord, the sire of the worlds, they entered heaven. The delighted, highly wise Rāma went there along with the Devas. Hence that Tīrtha named Gopratāra became famous.[1] The greatest salvation is had only at Gopratāra and not in other Tīrthas.

177-178. (In the other Tīrthas) O Brāhmaṇa, if Yoga is achieved through hundreds of births, salvation may or may not be achieved in the course of one birth. But there is no doubt at all in the case of Gopratāra. A person well equipped with devotion to Hari attains Yoga and salvation in the course of a single birth.

1. VV 176 ff describe the glory of Gopratāra Tīrtha. The procedure of performing the Yātrā of Svargadvāra is also described. Near the temple of Guptāra Mahādeva, a place is pointed out where Rāma ended his life (De 71).

179. A learned man, whoever he may be, who take his holy bath in Gopratāra, certainly enters the greatest abode that is difficult of access even to Yogins.

180. Particularly on the Kārttikī day, persons who have conquered the sense-organs should definitely take their holy bath. O Brāhmaṇa-sage, all the Devas including Indra come to Ayodhyā for bathing especially in Gopratāra, in the month of Kārttika.

181. A Tīrtha on a par with Gopratāra has never been there before nor will there ever be. Even Prayāgarāja (the king of all Tīrthas) comes here in the month of Kārttika for the purpose of the holy bath.

182. (*Defective Text**) (On taking its holy bath here) Prayāga becomes sinless after abandoning (i.e. absolving himself of) all sins. His body becomes white (clean) and the garment too is white (spotless). In the matter of purification, he will realize his desire, O excellent sage.

183. Whatever Tīrthas there are, whether in heaven or on the earth, O sage of good holy rites, all of them stay in Gopratāra in the month of Kārttika.

184-185. Japa, Homa, holy bath and charitable gift according to one's capacity in the Gopratāra Tīrtha yield infinite bliss. With faith and holy vow and observances all the Tīrthas go over to Gopratāra in Kārttika with the wish 'Let us go to Gopratāra in order to dispose of our sins.'

186. The holy bath undertaken in Gopratāra is destructive of all sins. By taking the holy bath in Gopratāra and by visiting Lord Guptahari, one is rid of all sins. There is no doubt about this.

187. After taking the holy bath the worship of Brāhmaṇas with Viṣṇu in view (i.e. regarding them as Viṣṇu) should be particularly performed by persons endowed with faith as well as by those of controlled holy rites.

188. A milch cow should be given to a Brāhmaṇa well-versed in Vedic knowledge. The cow should be adorned according to one's capacity. The Brāhmaṇa should be very pure. He must observe holy rites regularly. She (i.e. the cow) shall be given by one who has controlled himself for the purpose of propitiating Viṣṇu.

* '*Prayāge*' in this verse may be amended as Prayāgo. In Devanāgarī script गे (ge) and गो (go) being so similar, printers must have just missed the difference.

189. Many kinds of cooked rice, gold, and clothes of various kinds should be given by persons endowed with great devotion for attaining Hari.

190. By offering lights here one will obtain that benefit (merit) which is obtained in Kurukṣetra by giving Tulādāna at the time of a solar eclipse and on (the bank of) Narmadā at the time of a lunar eclipse.

191. If the light offered by one burns brightly with ghee or gingelly oil, O tiger among sages, of what avail is horse-sacrifice unto him?

192. If light is offered by one in front of Keśava, in the month of Kārttika, it is as good as having performed all Kratus and having taken the holy plunge in all the Tīrthas.

193. The different kinds of Tīrthas that yield worldly pleasures and salvation, are not worth even a sixteenth part of Gopratāra Tīrtha.

194. One who gives a small bit of gold to a Brāhmaṇa well-versed in the Vedas attains the auspicious goal. He blazes brilliantly like fire.

195. By giving cooked rice in accordance with injunctions at the Tīrtha called Gopratāra which is well-known in the three worlds, one (i.e. the donor) is not reborn.

196. A man who takes his holy bath there and who propitiates Brāhmaṇas attains the benefit of Sautrāmaṇi Yajña.

197. If a person observes holy rites with restraints and spends a month taking only a single meal everyday, all the sins committed by him in the course of the whole life, perish instantaneously.

198. People who immolate themselves in fire in accordance with the injunctions at Gopratāra, O ascetic, undoubtedly enter the region of Viṣṇu.

199. If people observe fast (unto death) here decisively, urged by devotion to Viṣṇu, they will never return to the earth even in hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

200. If a person worships Govinda in Gopratāra, it is said that he has acquired the merit of (gifting away) ten gold pieces.

201. The incense offered to Govinda yields the merit of Agnihotra. The merit of giving scents and perfumes is said to be equal to that of gifting plots of land.

202-203. O learned one, this holy spot is exceedingly miraculous. It is highly glorified. Particularly in the month of Kārttika,

if a person takes his holy bath here or in Svargadvāra with pure holy rites, he obtains the merit of donating ten gold pieceş. The donor of gold who gives away with faith shall be a resident of heaven.

204. One should perform the rite of Jāgaraṇa during the night on the fourteenth day in the bright half of the month of Jyeṣṭha during holy Parvan days in this excellent Tīrtha which yields the benefit of donating ten gold pieces.

205. He should observe fast and be pure after the holy bath. He should be devoted to the worship of Viṣṇu. He should carefully offer light that gives different kinds of merit.

206. The merits in heaven, in the terrestrial world, and in the nether worlds roar only as long as light is not offered in the water in front of Keśava in the month of Kārttika.

207. On the full-moon day, the devotee should take bath early in the morning with mind devoid of impurities. He should duly worship Hari and perform Śrāddha with great reverence.

208. He should offer cooked rice according to his capacity and propitiate Brāhmaṇas. He should honour a Brāhmaṇa couple by means of ornaments, garments etc.

209. He shall then visit Lord Guptahari and worship him in particular. Thereafter, he should bow down to him as well as the Tīrtha with the mind fixed on the deity with purity.

210. Then he shall take holy bath duly in Svargadvāra at midday. He shall be rid of all sins and shall be honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

211. Thus, the devotee should take the holy bath in accordance with the highly important injunctions in Gopratāra with great care. Thereby his form of meritorious deeds shall be well-known. By worshipping Acyuta he shall eliminate all the sins. Due to his reverence he shall have pure refulgence and attain Sāyujya with Viṣṇu.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Bṛhaspati, Rukmiṇī and Other Kuṇḍas

Agastya said:

1. I shall describe another Tīrtha which is known as Kṣīrodaka.[1] This Tīrtha is fascinating on account of its good qualities. It is situated to the north-west of Sītākuṇḍa. It is the abode of the mass of merits. It is destructive of all miseries.

2. It is at this place that formerly King Daśaratha performed a sacrifice named Putreṣṭi. It was for the sake of a son that he performed the Yajña with great faith in accordance with the injunctions.

3. With great pleasure, he concluded the sacrifice wherein monetary gifts were profusely and liberally distributed. At the close of the Yajña Kratubhuk (i.e. the Lord who accepts the offerings in sacrifice) appeared in an embodied form.

4. In his hand he held a gold vessel of great excellence filled with *Havis*. The excellent Vaiṣṇava refulgence had been mixed with that *Havis*. The king divided it into four parts and gave them to his wives.

5. The place where the milk which was very difficult to get was obtained, has become well-known as Kṣīrodaka. It is destructive of all sins. It became manifest with water (watery form). It is excellent and is a bestower of benefits.

6. By taking a holy bath there with great reverence, a wise man who has conquered his sense-organs, obtains all his desires and gets famous sons.

7-8. On the eleventh day in the bright half of the month of Āśvina, one should successfully perform the holy rite. He shall take his holy bath in accordance with the injunctions and offer charitable gifts to a Brāhmaṇa according to his capacity. By performing the worship of Viṣṇu duly as prescribed, he shall realize all his desires. He shall obtain sons too. Know that the man will duly obtain religious merits too.

1. VV 1-8 describe the Tīrtha Kṣīrodaka on the north-west of Sītā Kuṇḍa. Daśaratha performed the Putra-Kāmeṣṭi sacrifice here and got a gold vessel full of milk from Fire-god. Hence the name Kṣīrodaka. The special day for this Tīrtha is the 11th day in the bright half of Āśvina.

9-10. There is a Tīrtha situated to the south-west of Kṣīrodaka Tīrtha. It is well-known as Bṛhaspati Kuṇḍa.[1] It is decorated in an extraordinary manner (?) It subdues all sins. It is full of nectarine ripples of merits. It was here that the preceptor of Suras built his residence himself.

11. Accompanied by many groups of sages, the liberal-minded Bṛhaspati duly performed a Yajña there. That Kuṇḍa is beautiful and it bestows many benefits. The Kuṇḍa which has plenty of shade from the splendid leaves (of many trees) is inaccessible to sinners.

12. Devas including Indra took their holy bath there with care, and obtained the benefit inwardly desired by them, namely, excessive beauty and liberal-mindedness.

13. By taking the holy bath here and by making charitable gifts a man is liberated from sins.

14. The annual festival is to be celebrated on the fifth day in the bright half of the month of Bhādrapada. It is beneficial on other occasions too. A holy bath on Thursday yields much benefit.

15. He who performs the worship of Bṛhaspati as well as Viṣṇu at that place, becomes liberated from all sins. He rejoices in the world of Viṣṇu.

16. The holy bath in accordance with the injunctions along with *Saṅkalpa* (ritualistic resolve) should be performed by that person who is afflicted due to the *Gocara* and *Vedha* of Bṛhaspati (Jupiter).

17-19. That person should perform Homa and then, standing in water, should give an idol of Bṛhaspati made of gold, to an extremely pure Brāhmaṇa conversant with the Vedas. The idol shall be given along with a yellow garment, after the holy bath, for the purpose of alleviating the affliction. The Homa should be performed in accordance with the injunctions for the Japa of the Planets. If this is performed thus the affliction caused by the Planet disppears. There is no doubt about it.

20. The excellent Rukmiṇī Kuṇḍa[2] is to the south of it. The

1. VV 9-19 describe the efficacy of Bṛhaspati Kuṇḍa. It lies to the south-west of the above-mentioned Kuṇḍa. Its annual festival is celebrated on the 5th day in the bright half of Bhādrapada.

2. VV 20-30 describe Rukmiṇī Kuṇḍa lying to the south of Bṛhaspati Kuṇḍa. Its special day is the 9th day in the dark half of Kārttika (v 23).

gentle lady Rukminī, the beloved of Kṛṣṇa herself, built it.

21. Viṣṇu himself stays there in the water. Out of love for his wife, he granted a boon and made it well-arranged and effective.

22. With purity, a man should perform holy bath, Homa with Vaiṣṇava Mantras, charitable gift, worship of Brāhmaṇas and that of Viṣṇu there.

23. The annual festival is to be celebrated carefully with special effort on the ninth day in the dark half of the month of Kārttika, for the purpose of dispelling all sins.

24. By celebrating the annual festival even an impotent man begets a son. There is no doubt about it. The holy bath should be respectfully undertaken by a man or a woman.

25. After enjoying all kinds of worldly pleasures, they rejoice in the world of Viṣṇu. Particularly, if one desires fortune and glory, one should undertake the holy bath.

26. By taking the holy bath a man obtains all desires. For the propitiation of Rukminī and Śrīpati charitable gifts must be given according to one's capacity.

27-30. Brāhmaṇas should be particularly worshipped in accordance with the injunctions. The Lord of Lakṣmī should be meditated upon in this manner: He holds the conch, discus and iron club. He wears a yellow garment and garlands. He is eulogized by Nārada and others. He is seated on Garuḍa. He wears a crown (on his head). He is adorned by Mahendra and others. Kaustubha jewel can be seen on his chest. He is dark in complexion like a linseed flower. His eyes free from impurities resemble a lotus. For the purpose of acquiring all desires and benefits he is to be meditated upon thus.

If everything is performed thus, one shall realize all one's desires. There is no doubt about it. After enjoying pleasures in this world, he rejoices in the world of Hari.

31-32. Henceforth, I shall recount another Tīrtha that dispels sins. It causes the annihilation of all the sins and defects of Kali. It inspires faith. It is exceedingly sacred. It is matchless and bestows all desired objects. It is well-known as Dhanayakṣa.[1] It instils great confidence.

33-38. The Tīrtha is situated to the north-west of Rukminī Kuṇḍa.

1. VV 31-68 describe the Tīrtha called Dhana-Yakṣa. Its special day is the 14th day in the dark half of Māgha.

It is very auspicious. There was abundant wealth of the saintly king Hariścandra. A formidable Yakṣa had been posted there for guarding the vast wealth.

Formerly Viśvāmitra, the sage, had defeated king Hariścandra, the performer of a great Rājasūya sacrifice. The sage confiscated the entire kingdom including the army consisting of four divisions (i.e. Elephants, Chariots, Cavalry and Infantry). The sage entrusted the entire wealth to the care of the Yakṣa. He was named Pramanthura. He was a jolly good fellow. As he guarded the wealth with very great care and effort, the intelligent sage became satisfied. The sage who had conquered his sense-organs spoke these sweet words with great pleasure:

Viśvāmitra said:

39-40. Choose your boon, O (Yakṣa) conversant with Dharma, without any greed. Do it quickly. O intelligent one, I am particularly delighted with your great devotion.

Yakṣa said:

O excellent Brāhmaṇa, if you wish to grant me a boon as desired by me, then O great sage, O Brāhmaṇa-sage, be pleased to render my body sweet-smelling. It has become obnoxious in odour due to the curse of the king.

Agastya said:

41-43. When the Yakṣa spoke thus, the sage closed his eyes in meditation. He discerned him to be one deserving this on account of his great devotion. He bathed him with the Tīrtha water duly after respectfully performing the rite of *Saṅkalpa*. Within a moment he became one whose body was rendered very fragrant. Having become transformed like that, the intelligent Yakṣa stood in front of him bowing down his head with humility. He spoke these sweet words with palms joined in reverence:

Yakṣa said:

44-46. Thanks to your mercifulness. I have become possessor of a fragrant body, O clever sage. Do something so that this holy spot may be well-known, O omniscient one. O Brāhmaṇa-sage, do

exert yourself so that with your favour it shall become famous.

Agastya said:

On being told thus, the sage thought for a short while with closed and motionless eyes. Being delighted with the Yakṣa, he spoke to him in a gentle tone:

Viśvāmitra said:

47. O Yakṣa, this holy spot will attain matchless renown. This Tīrtha will become well-known as Dhanayakṣa.

48. It will bestow bodily beauty. It will instil faith and confidence. By taking the holy bath in accordance with the injunction (here), one will get rid of foul smell. Holy bath here should be carefully taken by those who are desirous of merit.

49-50. Charitable gift should be given as per one's faith as well as financial capacity. Worship of Lakṣmī should be particularly performed. By means of holy bath and charitable gift (one should strive) for the propitiation of Lakṣmī in particular. O Yakṣa of good holy rites, by the worship of the nine *Nidhis* (Treasures) too (this shall be achieved). He will enjoy happiness in this world and rejoice in the other world.

51-57. These are the nine *Nidhis: Mahāpadma, Padma, Śaṅkha, Makara, Kacchapa, Mukunda, Kunda, Nīla* and *Kharva.*

O sinless one, these Nidhis will also be present in this Kuṇḍa. A special worship of these yields much benefit. The worship of Goddess Lakṣmī and of the Nidhis should be performed in the middle of water. Many kinds of cooked rice and different kinds of clothes should be given. Gold etc. should be given according to one's capacity, but one should not be too miserly in spending money for this purpose. The charitable gift should be distributed scrupulously and secretly. Fruits and gold pieces should be given in particular. The holy bath taken on the fourteenth day in the dark half (of the month) yields much benefit. It should be performed with more intense faith by persons endowed with great faith.

58-60. The annual festival is to be celebrated on the fourteenth day in the dark half of the month of Māgha. Holy bath should be taken and libations to the Manes must be particularly offered. The devotee should say like this: "May the universe including Brahmā at the top and a blade of grass at the bottom be pleased".

Saying thus he should offer three handfuls of water as libations duly with the sacred thread over the right shoulder. One who does like this, O Yakṣa, never becomes deluded. One who takes bath here goes to heaven. One who takes bath here shall be happy.

61. O Yakṣa, at the outset your worship must be performed by a person who takes his bath. By your worship in accordance with the injunction the sins of men will perish.

62. The Mantra for the worship is like this: "Obeisance, O lord of Pramathas." The worship, *Śravaṇa* (listening) etc. should be performed in the middle of the Tīrtha.

63. The worship of Nidhis and Lakṣmī and particularly your worship, O Yakṣa (shall be performed so). The clever one who does like this shall attain all the desired objects.

64-65.One who seeks wealth shall obtain wealth; one who seeks sons shall beget a son; one who seeks salvation shall attain salvation. What is that which is not obtained here?

O Yakṣa, if anyone, out of delusion, does not take the holy bath here, you will take away his full one year's merit.

66-68. After granting him boons like this, Viśvāmitra, the great sage, a storehouse of penance, vanished then.

Ever since then, that holy spot attained great fame. The entire ground of that holy spot is made of gold. It is studded with plenty of divine jewels. It is rendered splendid all round. O learned one, he who does like this attains the greatest goal.

69. To the north of Dhanayakṣa, O Brāhmaṇa, is situated the well-known Vasiṣṭha Kuṇḍa[1] that is destructive of all sins always.

70. Vasiṣṭha, the excellent storehouse of penance, resides there always. Arundhatī, of pure holy rites, is always near him.

71. If any intelligent man of great purity takes holy bath there especially along with offering Śrāddha, his merit is very excellent.

72. Vāmadeva too is present there, O sinless one. Vasiṣṭha and Vāmadeva are to be worshipped with great care.

73. Arundhatī, the chaste lady, is to be specially worshipped. Holy bath must be taken duly and charitable gift must be made according to one's capacity.

74. There is no doubt about this that he will obtain all the

1. VV 69-76 describe Vasiṣṭha Kuṇḍa which lies to the north of the above Kuṇḍa. Its annual festival is celebrated on the 5th day in the bright half of Bhādrapada.

desired benefits. He who takes holy bath here, shall become equal to Vasiṣṭha.

75. The annual festival is to be celebrated on the fifth day in the bright half of the month of Bhādrapada by a person with self-control as his Vrata. The festival should be celebrated in accordance with the procedure.

76. The worship of Viṣṇu should be performed here scrupulously and faithfully. He (i.e. the worshipper) shall be rid of all sins and be sanctified and honoured in the world of Viṣṇu.

77. Stationed to the west of Vasiṣṭhakuṇḍa, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, is the well-reputed Sāgara Kuṇḍa[1], the bestower of all desires, good things and accomplishments. By taking the holy bath here and by making charitable gifts one shall obtain all desires.

78. One who takes holy bath here on Parvan days, shall attain that imperishable merit which one attains through the holy bath in the sea on a full-moon day.

79. Hence holy bath must be taken here in accordance with the injunctions by those who desire a son. The special holy bath should be taken on the full-moon day in the month of Āśvina.

80. A man who does like this, O learned one, is liberated from all sins. By taking the holy bath here and by making charitable gifts according to one's capacity, a man shall go to heaven.

81. To the south-west of Sāgara is situated the excellent Yoginī Kuṇḍa where the sixty-four Yoginīs stationed in the waters are present.

82. They are the bestowers of all objects on men and on women in particular. All of them accord the greatest Siddhis; they bestow all desires and benefits.

83. Holy bath should be carefully and particularly taken by men for propitiation of the Yoginīs on the eighth day in the bright half of the month of Āśvina.

84. Holy bath and charitable gifts—all shall be fruitful here. Yakṣiṇīs and others can be won over here. There is no doubt about it.

85. To the east of Yoginīkuṇḍa is the excellent Urvaśīkuṇḍa[2].

1. To the west of Vasiṣṭha Kuṇḍa is Sāgara Kuṇḍa (vv 77-80) and to the south-west of it lies Yoginī Kuṇḍa (vv 81-84).

2. VV 85-107 give an interesting story about how the celestial damsel Urvaśī approached Sage Raibhya (different from Sage Raibhya of Mbh) to disturb his penance and was cursed to be ugly. Her beauty was restored at what is known as Urvaśī Kuṇḍa. Her annual festival is celebrated on the 3rd day of the bright half of Bhādrapada.

A man who takes his holy bath here, O learned one, shall attain Urvaśī in heaven.

86-87. Formerly, it is said, a clever sage named Raibhya, an ascetic, performed a great penance on the slopes of Himavān, abstaining from food and curbing his sense-organs. On seeing the elaborate penance the Lord of Suras became frightened. Zealously he despatched Urvaśī for causing obstacles in his penance.

88. On being sent by him, that lady with stately, elephent-like gait stayed near the excellent hermitage of Raibhya on the slopes of Himavān.

89-90. She (sported about) among the bowers of creepers and bushes of full-blown flowers in the forest, where birds chirped sweetly, where deer stood motionless on hearing the songs playfully sung by Kinnarīs and which had golden colour on account of the filaments and blossoms shaken and separated from Punnāga (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), Keśara (*Rottleria tinctoria*) and Aśoka. It appeared as though a second Meru mountain had been created by Brahmā. There Urvaśī shone like a receptacle of all the splendour that the Lord of Love with the flowery bow possessed.

91. She was (as it were) a nectarine river of very extra-ordinary beauty.

92. She appeared to be shining with the lustre of white pearls on account of the excellent complexion and refulgence of her limbs. She was embellished with youthful sweetness and youth.

93-98. As she turned her gaze backwards, her side-glances shed forth white lustre. With this she made her lips resemble fresh sprouts. A bunch of mango blossoms wherein bees were humming was hanging from each of her ears. She was (on the whole) like a Pārijāta creeper growing out of divine nectar. Her waist was slender. She had broad hips and fully developed breasts. Her complexion was fair. She was as though a spear (in the hands) of the god of Love who had sharpened his arrows on a whetstone.

The sage saw that lady of large eyes within that hermitage. It appeared that in order to deceive the Three-eyed Lord the god of Love who had been burned in the fire of the eye (of Śiva) had created the physical form of a maiden. On seeing that large-eyed lady who had tucked a creeper of the hermitage into her girdle and the flowers thereof into her ear-rings, the sense-organs of the sage became stirred and excited. He became extremely furious. Blazing with anger he cursed her.

Raibhya said:

99. Become exceedingly ugly, O woman, too proud of your beauty. It is for the purpose of causing obstacles in my penance that you have come near me.

Agastya said:

100. On being cursed thus angrily by that sage that woman of splendid eyes joined her palms in reverence and spoke to the sage respectfully:

Urvaśī said:

101. O holy lord, be pleased with me because I had been only a tool in the hands of others, fully dependent upon them. O sage of steady vows, how can I get redemption from your curse?

Raibhya said:

102-103. In Ayodhyā there is an extremely great and holy Tīrtha. Do take your holy bath therein and regain your great beauty. Certainly that Tīrtha will acquire fame after your name.

Agastya said:

104-107. At the instance of that Brāhmaṇa, she performed everything with great faith. She became a beautiful woman once again immediately. That holy spot became very famous.

If any person duly takes holy bath here, O excellent sage, he/she will acquire great charm and beauty. There is no doubt about it.

The annual festival shall be on the third day in the bright half of the month of Bhādrapada.Viṣṇu should be worshipped by the people here for the attainment of all desired objects.

A learned man who does like this shall always live in the world of Viṣṇu. The man or the woman shall attain all desires.

108-110. To the south of Urvaśīkuṇḍa, O tiger among sages, is Ghoṣārka Kuṇḍa[1], a great Tīrtha that destroys all the sins for-

1. VV 108-139 describe how (the mythical) King Ghoṣa was cured of his festering wound by his bath in this Tīrtha and he installed Sun-god here, bearing the joint name of himself and Sun-god (Ghoṣārka).

ever. By taking the holy bath here and making charitable gifts one is honoured in the world of Sun. There is no other Tīrtha anywhere on a par with this Tīrtha.

A man with festering sores and wounds, an impoverished person, a leper or one overwhelmed with misery shall attain all desires, if he takes the holy bath duly.

111-113a. The holy bath should with faith be performed particularly on Sundays. If desirous of going to the world of Sun-god, a holy bath should be performed on the sixth day in the bright half of the month of Bhādrapada or Māgha. The bath should be taken duly and carefully. The holy bath in the month of Pauṣa, particularly on Sundays, is highly beneficial. The holy bath on the seventh day coinciding with a Sunday, is excessively beneficial.

113b-115. Formerly there was a king in the solar race named Ghoṣa. He was the sole emperor of the entire earth girdled by the ocean. Due to his fame the spheres of the three worlds shone brilliantly. Remarkably refulgent due to his valour he appeared like another Sun. He had vanquished hordes of enemies by means of his powerful brawny arms.

116-121. Once that ruler entrusted the ministers with the administration of the earth. Interested in hunting, he wandered in the forest where many trees had grown thickly together. Though that king was handsome, yet his lotus-like hands became infested with worms due to the sins of the previous births indicating inauspiciousness. He was devoid of all pride. He happened to be hunting alone. Once while he wandered about here and there in the forest killing deer, boars and lions, he became oppressed with thirst. His body became utterly tired and emaciated. In front of him, the king saw a lake and sages engaged in taking holy bath and saying the Sandhyā prayers etc. Thereupon, the king duly performed the Ācamana rite and took the holy bath. Presently he assumed a divine body. His mind was filled with delight and free from impurities. He knew from the sages that it was a Tīrtha. He then recited the prayer pleasing to Sun.

The king said:

122. O lord, O lord of the chiefs of Devas, obeisance to you; to the lord in the form of consciousness. Obeisance to Savitṛ, to Sūrya who gives delight to the universe.

123. Obeisance to the lord, to the abode of refulgence. Obeisance to you, identical with the three (Vedas). Obeisance to you; to Vivasvān; to the lord conversant with Yoga; to the lord in the form of *Sat* (existence).

124. Obeisance to the gratest one; to the great lord; to the dispeller of darkness of the three worlds; to the unthinkable lord; obeisance to you always having brilliant refulgence.

125. Obeisance to one fond of Yoga; obeisance to Yoga; obeisance to the one conversant with Yoga always; obeisance to Oṁkāra; to the one in the form of Vaṣaṭkāra; to the one, embodiment of perfect knowledge.

126. Obeisance to Yajña; to the lord with Yajña as the measuring unit; obeisance to *Havis;* obeisance to the *Ṛtvik;* obeisance to the destroyer of sickness; obeisance to the one of good form; to the one who accords delight to lotuses.

127. Hail to the excessively gentle; to the one extremely fierce! Obeisance to the lord of Suras; salute to you partaking of the *Satras* (sacrifices); to the protector of devotees; to the one fond of the Ātman.

128. Obeisance to the perpetual brightener of the worlds; to the one who causes welfare to the worlds. Be pleased with me. I have bowed down to you now. I am devoted to you.

Agastya said:

129. Even as he said thus Sun-god became himself pleased with the king. With a desire to do something pleasing to his devotee (Sun-god) promptly appeared before him. As the king bowed down his head with humility, he spoke these sweet words:

Sun-god said:

130. O great king, choose a boon. I am pleased with you. Here I am in front of you. I shall grant you the boon that is mentally desired by you.

The king said:

131. O lord, O infinite one, O Sun-god, if you wish to grant me a boon, may an image of yours named after me stand here permanently.

Sun said:

132-135. Let it be so, O lord of men. Your desire is a fascinating one. I will be pleased with those men who read this prayer composed and recited by you. O king, I shall give them all that they desire. This holy spot will become extremely renowned in the world after your name. One who takes the holy bath here, obtains all desires. The holy bath here shall always be undertaken by a devotee of mine. Whatever he desires he shall obtain it.

Agastya said:

136. After granting this boon, the lord who was endowed with great compassion, Sun-god with a thousand rays, vanished.

137. The king installed an idol of Sun-god, that issued forth from the disc of the Sun. He himself worshipped that excellent idol.

138. That Kuṇḍa became well-known as Ghoṣārkakuṇḍa after the name of the king. By taking holy bath there a man shall shine and reside in the world of Sun always.

139. Thus, in accordance with the good injunctions the devotee should worship the idol of Sun with great devotion, free from impurities and with great respect. At the outset he shall take his holy bath in the nectarine Kuṇḍa. (Thereby) he shall attain wide reputation free from impurities. He shall reside in the world of Sun.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Ratikuṇḍa and other Holy Tīrthas

Agastya said:

1-6. To the west of Ghoṣārkatīrtha, O Brāhmaṇa-sage, is situated a Tīrtha well-known as Rati Kuṇḍa.[1] It is destructive of all sins always. By taking holy bath here and by making charitable gifts, one shall attain excellent splendour.

1. VV 1-12 describe Rati Kuṇḍa and Kusumāyudha Kuṇḍa which lie to the west of Ghoṣārka Tīrtha. Its special day is the 5th day in the bright half of Māgha (known as Vasanta-Pañcamī).

To the west of that is situated a Tīrtha named Kusumāyudha Kuṇḍa. This is matchless and famous. It is conducive to the attainment of all desired objects. By taking holy bath here and by making charitable gifts in accordance with the injunctions a man obtains physical form on a par with that of the god of Love. O sage, there is no doubt about it.

One who faithfully takes holy bath, O Brāhmaṇa, in Ratikuṇḍa as well as Kusumāyudhakuṇḍa, shall attain the highest happiness.

Couples who take holy bath in both the Kuṇḍas will become famous like Rati and Kāma. They will be handsome and charming permanently.

Hence holy bath in accordance with the injunctions should be taken by those who desire Dharma. Charitable gifts should be given in accordance with one's capacity for the propitiation of Rati and Kāma.

7-10. Rati and Kāma shall invariably be pleased with them. Holy bath taken here on the fifth day in the bright half of Māgha bestows auspiciousness.

Couples must first take their bath in Ratikuṇḍa and afterwards in Kandarpakuṇḍa on that day very scrupulously, O Brāhmaṇa. The worship of Rati and Kandarpa should be specially performed. A Brāhmaṇa couple should be honoured with ornaments, garments etc. The devotee shall attain all desires. There is no doubt about this.

11. The devotee should worship the Brāhmaṇa couple with sandalpaste, agallochum, camphor, musk, saffron etc., with different kinds of clothes and with flowers.

12. When this is performed for the propitiation of Rati and Kandarpa, there is no doubt, O Brāhmaṇa, that the couple shall be on a par with Rati and Kandarpa.

13-14. A holy spot well-known as Mantreśvara[1] is situated to the west of Kusumāyudhakuṇḍa. It is very rarely accessible. If persons take their bath in that Tīrtha and visit Lord Mantreśvara, they will never return (to the earth) even in hundreds and crores of Kalpas.

15-18. Formerly Rāma of pure holy rites completed the task of the Devas. Then the king had consultation with Kāla in regard to

1. VV 13-20a give the importance of Mantreśvara installed by Rāma after his consultation with Kāla. Its special day is the 14th day in the bright half of Caitra.

going back to heaven. Where the Lord who had conquered the sense-organs took his bath, he installed a Liṅga well-known as Mantreśvara.

To the north of it there is a beautiful lake adorned with lilies and blue lotuses. Taking holy bath there and making charitable gifts bestows various benefits. It is very excellent.

The annual festival is to be celebrated on the fourteenth day in the bright half of the month of Caitra. By taking the holy bath, by making charitable gifts and by worshipping Brāhmaṇas, one attains infinite bliss in heaven. There is no doubt about this.

19-21a. The greatness of Mantreśvara cannot be adequately described by anyone, O Brāhmaṇa. The Lord is the bestower of excellent benefit. A Liṅga on par with Mantreśvara has never existed before nor will there be another.

The deity should be worshipped carefully by means of fragrant flowers, incense etc., unguents and other things. It is the bestower of all desired objects. If everything is performed thus, undoutbtedly, salvation is within his reach.

21b-22. To the north of this, O sinless one, is the Goddess Śītalā[1] stationed. By worshipping that goddess a learned man is liberated from all sins. The goddess can be worshipped always but particularly on Mondays the worship is to be performed by men with great care for the attainment of all objects.

23. When there is fear of the outbreak of smallpox etc. her worship is to be performed by men. It is destructive of the eruption of the disease etc.

24-28. There itself, to the north of it, is the goddess well-known as Bandī. Merely by remembering her, one is rid of the fear of being fettered.

Those who are bound with chains by an infuriated king, shall become liberated instantaneously on remembering Goddess Bandī.

A festival should be celebrated in her honour strenuously by men particularly on Tuesdays. It bestows all desired objects.

She is to be ardently and carefully worshipped by means of perfumes, flowers, incenses, lights and food offerings of various kinds, O sage of holy rites. In order to propitiate Bandī, O ex-

1. There are minor sacred spots and deities described like Śītalā, the deity of Smallpox (vv 21b-23), Bandī, the releaser of prisoners (vv 24-28), Cuḍakī (vv 29-37), Mahāratna (vv 35-37), Durbhara and Mahābhara (vv 38-47).

cellent sage, Brāhmaṇas should be fed. If this is done, one shall attain all desires. There is no doubt about it.

29-32. There itself, to the north of it, is the goddess well-known on the earth as Cuḍakī. By remembering her, men can achieve great Siddhis.

When success in undertakings is doubtful, when there is an imminent fear, men shall remember her. They will achieve everything.

In front of her, men should make the sound of snapping the fingers and the thumb. Lights should be offered carefully by persons of controlled selves. The offering of lamps is honoured. It bestows all desired objects on men. Her festival is to be celebrated on all Caturdaśī days.

33. To the east thereof is an excellent Tīrtha well-known as Mahāratna. It is the most excellent of all splendid Tīrthas.

34. By taking holy bath here, by making charitable gifts and by worshipping Brāhmaṇas, there shall be the attainment of all desired objects. There is no doubt about it.

35-37. The annual festival is to be celebrated on the fourteenth day in the dark half of the month of Bhādrapada.

It is learnt that the main festival is well-known as Mahāratna. Hence the excellent Tīrtha is well-known as Mahāratna. There, charitable gifts giving satisfaction to Brāhmaṇas should be made. The festival of *Jāgaraṇa* (keeping awake) should always be celebrated, O Brāhmaṇa-sage, by women too for the sake of valour, good fortune, prosperity and all sorts of happiness. Holy bath should be taken faithfully and carefully by men.

38-42. To the south-west of it are the two auspicious lakes Durbhara and Mahābhara. They are liberal in bestowing auspicious merits.

By taking a holy bath there a man always attains the region of heaven. Many kinds of wealth and garments should be given away (at those Tīrthas). Worship of Śiva should be performed by men after taking bath in both the lakes. One should be endowed with ardent devotion and different kinds of (noble) sentiments.

Maheśvara, the blue-throated lord, should be worshipped with splendid flowers, sweet scents etc. The Enemy of Andhaka is worthy of being propitiated by even Yogins.

After meditating on Śiva thus, along with (Goddess Pārvatī), a pure man devoid of sins attains all desires immediately. He shall reside always in the world of Śiva.

43. By doing this, O Brāhmaṇa, a man is liberated from all sins.

44-45. At the excellent Tīrtha called Mahābhara and at Durbhara, on the fourteenth day in the dark half of Bhādrapada, one should devoutly and according to injunctions, perform the worship of Śiva and especially of Brāhmaṇas.

A man who performs this with devotion happily resides in Śiva's world. A person who does it thus is never deluded.

46-47. The eternal Lords Viṣṇu and Rudra become greatly pleased with him. Merely by remembering these two one is liberated from all sins.

Therefore, of what avail is much talk? O Brāhmaṇa, this Tīrtha is excellent; it suppresses all sins. It always brings about all the desired objects.

48. Henceforth I shall recount another auspicious Tīrtha, where without good fortune it is impossible to celebrate festivals or to make charitable gifts.

49-50. To the north-east of the holy spot of Durbhara there is a great Tīrtha named Mahāvidyā. (Merely) by visiting it Siddhis will be within the reach of men. After taking holy bath in the lake in front of the deity, a man who visits Mahāvidyā with faith and devotion shall attain the greatest goal.

51. Similarly Siddhapīṭha is very well-known. It inspires confidence and faith. O Brāhmaṇa, worship should be performed there with great devotion.

52-56. The pure devotee should, with concentration of mind, always practise and repeat with faith any Mantra which may be Śaiva, Śākta (pertaining to Śakti), Gāṇapatya or Vaiṣṇava. O learned Brāhmaṇa, he shall achieve permanent Siddhi. It will be an astonishing show.

Hence Japa etc. should be performed without any lethargy. There should be had monthly festivals on the eighth and ninth days. Various kinds of fruits and cooked rice in plenty should be given away. The deity should be bathed with milk. It should be ardently worshipped.

At this place even wicked black magical *mantras* especially *Uccāṭana* (spells for eliminating the enemy) and *Mohana* (spells for deluding the enemy) become perfected and mastered.

57. At the place called Siddhasthāna, the mastering of Mokṣa is the best. Japa, Homa, charitable gifts (everything) shall be of

infinite benefit.

58. O Brāhmaṇa, O sage of auspicious rites, a man who goes there during the nine days in the bright half of the month of Āśvina is liberated from all sins.

59-65. After conquering Rāvaṇa who had made the worlds cry aloud, the leading scion of the family of Raghu returned in the company of Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. In order to receive Rāma, Bharata went to this place on foot. Endowed with good fortune and accompanied by his followers (Bharata) had halted here.

The divine cow appeared there with milk flowing from her udders in profuse quantity. On seeing the milk falling on the ground, the monkeys and the Rākṣasas were struck with wonder. They asked Rāma (the lord of) mobile and immobile beings: "O great king, what is this?" The great scion of the family of Raghu said to them: "Vasiṣṭha knows everything. We shall ask that sage." On being told thus, all of them with the king as their leader, stood in front of Vasiṣṭha and asked him with palms joined in reverence. Vasiṣṭha meditated for a short while. Addressing Rāma in front of all, the sage said to him calmly:

Vasiṣṭha said:

66-68. Listen, O mighty Rāma. This is the auspicious Kāmadhenu. Out of affection for you, she has come down here with milk flowing from her udders.

In the middle of the flowing milk Rudra has come up. He has come to see you, the excellent (warrior) who have conquered the enemy and who have fulfilled the task of Devas. Worship him quickly near this Kuṇḍa. Without any delay worship this auspicious Śiva ardently. In this Kṣīrakuṇḍa he is the holy deity well-known as Dugdheśvara.

Agastya said:

69. Then the glorious scion of the family of Raghu worshipped that Liṅga, known as Dugdheśvara, in accordance with the injunctions of Vasiṣṭha.

70-73. Since that Kuṇḍa where the milk flowed, was honoured by Sītā, that Kuṇḍa attained a matchless reputation as 'Sītākuṇḍa' from that time onwards.

Men who take their holy bath in Sītākuṇḍa and visit Lord Dugdheśvara are liberated from all sins. There is no doubt about this. Holy bath taken, Japa, Homa performed and charitable gifts offered here shall bestow infinite merit.

By worshipping Sītā and Rāma at Sītākuṇḍa along with Lakṣmaṇa and by worshipping Dugdheśvara one shall attain all desires. The annual festival is to be celebrated on the fourteenth day in the month of Jyeṣṭha.

74-78. One who is very righteous and merciful and performs the rites like this duly, goes to the greatest abode, after reaching which one does not become grief-stricken.

There on the eastern side is the great Tīrtha of Taponidhi ('Storehouse of penance') made by Sugrīva. It is an auspicious Tīrtha that is situated nearby. One who takes the holy bath there, makes charitable gifts and carefully worships Rāma, shall attain all desires on that very day.

To the west of it is the holy spot Hanumatkuṇḍa. To the west of it, O Brāhmaṇa, is the splendid lake named Vibhīṣaṇa Saras. By taking a holy bath in both of them, by making charitable gifts and by worshipping Rāma there itself in accordance with the injunctions, one obtains (fulfilment of) all desires.

This is that extremely pure Ayodhyā. It is known as Dharmanidhi ('Storehouse of piety').

79-81. On being told thus* all of them with Vibhīṣaṇa as their leader humbly asked sage Vasiṣṭha with great respect: "O sage, O storehouse of great penance, recount this rare story. Describe the glory of Ayodhyā, so that after hearing the excellent greatness, we will be able to undertake the pilgrimage in accordance with the injunctions. Take pity on us, O storehouse of penance, and recount it."

Vasiṣṭha said:

82. May all the sages listen to the wonderful glory of Ayodhyā[1]. On listening to it, one is rid of all sins. There is no doubt about it.

* All the verses from v 71 *sītākuṇḍe narāḥ snātvā* "Men who take their bath in Sītākuṇḍa" up to this verse constitute presumably Vasiṣṭha's speech.

1. After describing minor Tīrthas, the author stresses the importance of Ayodhyā and outlines the pilgrimage to Ayodhyā in vv 82-116.

83. This exceedingly great, secret, holy spot named Ayodhyā is very excellent. It always causes salvation to all living beings.

84. In this (holy spot), Siddhas and Devas have adopted the Vaiṣṇava Vrata. They regularly wear different kinds of symbols and are desirous of the world of Viṣṇu.

85-88. They practise the great Yoga. They have just controlled the *Prāṇas* (vital airs); they have subdued their sense-organs. This holy spot is full of different kinds of trees and is the abode of many kinds of birds. It is beautified by many lakes full of the beauty and splendour of lotuses and lilies. It is frequented by groups of celestial damsels. This is the holy spot of Hari. This great place (city) named Ayodhyā is an excellent holy spot.

89-91. By taking holy bath or by residing in Naimiṣa, Kurukṣetra, Gaṅgādvāra and Puṣkara salvation is not attained (as easily as) it is obtained here. For that reason it surpasses all other holy spots. Either at Prayāga or here, one will attain salvation by resorting to Hari. This alone is known as greater than all other excellent Tīrthas.

Salvation which is considered difficult to have is obtained in this holy spot by all Siddhas, great sages and ascetics of unmanifest symbols.

92-94. Hari grants them Yogic power and excellent glory and even Sāyujya with himself. This excellent holy spot is desired (by all).

Brahmā accompanied by celestial sages, Śrī, Vāyu (Wind-god), Divākara (Sun-god), the Lord of Devas (i.e. Indra) known as Śakra and other heaven-dwellers—all these noble souls worship Hari everywhere with great respect. Other Yogins, Siddhas of great holy rites identical with the holy spot, worship Hari with their minds not diverted to anyone else.

95. Even a person whose mind is attracted towards sensual objects, even a man who has forgotten everything about piety and holiness, does not resume worldly existence after dying in this holy spot.

96. Those who are dependent on *Nigamas* (Vedas), those who abide by *Sattras* (sacrificial sessions), those who have conquered the sense-organs, those who observe holy rites without undertaking any other activities—all these are sanctified by Hari.

97. With the favour of Hari these intelligent ones devoid of attachment attain the greatest salvation after the disintegration

(i.e. death) of the physical body.

98. A Yogin practising for thousands of births may not attain the great salvation. That salvation is obtained by dying here.

99. I shall succinctly describe the wonderful glory of this holy spot. This alone is the greatest holy spot. This alone is the greatest region. No other holy spot like this is seen elsewhere.

100. Persons desirous of merits should go to this holy spot on pilgrimage. O intelligent ones, the pilgrimage has to be performed by persons with great faith in accordance with the injunctions and in due order.

101-103. On the first day *Upavāsa* (holy fast) must be performed by a person of controlled self. Thereafter he should undertake holy bath and then (give) charitable gifts according to his capacity. The term *Upavāsa* means this: One who has abstained from sins has his *Vāsa* (residence) with good qualities. That is the correct interpretation of the word *Upavāsa*. Hence it means avoidance of all sensual enjoyments.

After observing the fast the man of good holy rites should take the holy bath and make charitable gifts according to his capacity.

104-107. One should perform all these in due order: After worshipping a Brāhmaṇa duly, he should visit Lord Viṣṇuhari. Then he should take bath at Svargadvāra and worship Viṣṇu with concentration. Then the devotee observing the Vrata shall have a shave in the holy spot named Dharma. Thereafter, he should take baths in Pāpamocanaka and Ṛṇamocanaka Tīrtha. Then he should visit Lord Candrahari and Lord Dharmahari. After visiting Cakrahari he should make charitable gifts according to his capacity. Then the devotee takes his holy bath in Brahmakuṇḍa for the purpose of achieving all desired objects. Then he should perform the Jāgaraṇa rite at night in the vicinity of Mahāvidyā.

108. When the day dawns clearly, the person observing the good holy rites should get up and duly take his holy bath at Svargadvāra carefully.

109-110. After performing the Śrāddha rite duly and making charitable gifts according to his capacity, the devotee should duly worship Viṣṇu and the Brāhmaṇas repeatedly. A couple should also be worshipped and honoured with garments etc. Plenty of monetary gifts too should be offered by persons endowed with great faith.

111-114. After honouring the Brāhmaṇas duly, the pure man

should himself take his food. On the next day the devotee endowed with great faith, should get up (early in the morning) and visit Rukmiṇī Tīrtha and other Tīrthas in the proper order. In the different places the man should take his holy bath and make charitable gifts according to his capacity. Then he should worship Viṣṇu carefully. He shall be free from mental, verbal and physical impurities. Thus, with the self fully controlled, the devotee of pure holy rites should conclude his pilgrimage successfully. If at any place he may happen to die (during the performance of pilgrimage) he shall attain the great salvation.

Agastya said:

115-116. After listening to these words spoken by Vasiṣṭha thus those Rākṣasas and others with Vibhīṣaṇa as their leader performed everything in accordance with the injunctions. Then they became free from impurities.

Thus the (Monkeys etc.) with Sugrīva as their chief performed the pilgrimage in accordance with the detailed injunctions. They acquired plenty of merit. Due to their endeavour to go back to heaven all the dirt in their bodies vanished. They attained excellent bodies. All or them attained the full complement of good qualities.

CHAPTER NINE

*The Glory of Various Tīrthas**

Agastya said:

1. To the south-east of Jaṭākuṇḍa is situated the great Tīrtha well-known as Gayākūpa. It bestows everything desired.

* This chapter gives succinctly the importance of remaining Tīrthas such as Gayā Kūpa (vv 1-11), Piśācamocana (vv 12-14), Mānasa (vv 15-18), the river Tamasā (and traditional yet fine description of its natural beauty) and the hermitage of Māṇḍavya (vv 19-38), Sītā Kuṇḍa, Bhairava, Bharata (and his residence at Nandigrāma) (vv 46-54), Jaṭā Kuṇḍa where Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa got their matted hair removed (vv 55-58). The annual festival thereof is celebrated on the 14th day in the dark half of Caitra.

2. By taking the holy bath there, by giving charitable gifts according to his capacity and by performing Śrāddha-rite, an excellent Brāhmaṇa obtains everything he desires.

3. The manes (fathers and grandfathers), who may be in hells, go to the world of Viṣṇu when that Śrāddha is performed.

4-5. One shall become free from indebtedness to the Pitṛs, O Brāhmaṇa, when that Śrāddha is performed. The offering of rice-balls should be in accordance with one's capacity. It has been directed by the Sages that a Śrāddha should be performed with barley grains, milk pudding, oil cake or jaggery in that Tīrtha. It is said that it causes satisfaction to the Pitṛs.

6. Śrāddha should be performed there by men endowed with faith. Their Pitṛs will be delighted. All the deities (too) will be delighted.

7-10. When the Pitṛs are satisfied, the devotee becomes prosperous and blessed with sons. The Pitṛs propitiated by means of Śrāddha grant many sons, prosperity and glory and abundant worldly pleasures to those who perform Śrāddha. There is no doubt about this.

Hence Śrāddha should be performed here ardently and in accordance with the injunctions by persons endowed with faith, who wish to gain cherished benefits. Particularly the Śrāddha offered to the Pitṛs at Gayākūpa becomes infinite in benefit.

When the new-moon day coincides with Monday, the Śrāddha should be performed to the Pitṛs. The Śrāddha offered thus has infinite benefit.

11. Even on other Mondays Śrāddha can be performed in accordance with the injunctions. It gives satisfaction to the Pitṛs. What is offered will yield infinite benefit.

12. To the east of this is the Tīrtha called Piśācamocana which is the most excellent among the excellent ones. It bestows benefits.

13-14. If one takes bath there and makes charitable gifts, one never becomes a Piśāca. Holy bath, charitable gift and Śrāddha should be particularly performed there with great effort by men endowed with faith.

The holy bath should be taken especially on the fourteenth day in the bright half of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa for getting rid of Piśācahood.

15. Very near it, to the eastern side, is the Tīrtha named

Mānasa. It is the foremost among residences of meritorious persons. There the holy bath must be specially taken. One attains all desired benefits by taking the holy bath and by making charitable gifts.

16. Different kinds of sins, even if they were to be as huge as Meru, vanish due to the holy bath there.

17. Whatever sin, whether mental, verbal or physical, exists in one, shall become dissolved on account of the holy bath.

18. The (annual) festival of this Tīrtha should be particularly celebrated on the full-moon day in the month of Prauṣṭhapada (Bhādrapada) by men of meritorious nature engaged in holy rites.

19. To the south of it is the river named Tamasā (mod. Tonse), the sole source of merit. It is destructive of great sins.

20-23. The holy bath and charitable rites performed here are always destructive of all sins.

There are many types of holy abodes of sages of purified souls on its banks that are beautiful and always yield fruits. There is the holy abode of Sage Māṇḍavya. It is destructive of sins. It is on its banks, O excellent sage. It is very fascinating everywhere. His penance-grove is very beautiful and very charming on account of the different kinds of trees. That forest from which the excellent river Tamasā originates is highly meritorious and holy. It is an excellent region.

24-28. By visiting it men will get all their sins destroyed. The penance-grove is rendered splendid, due to the various hedges and bushes in full bloom. It is very charming. A spreading network of creepers droops down. There are Priyaṅgu (*Aglaia odorata*) trees all round with plenty of flowers. There are Ketaka trees (*Pandamus odoratissimus*) in full bloom with many thorns. It is full of hedges of Tamāla trees (Indian Cinnamon) of great fragrance, Karṇikāras (*Pterospermum acerifolium*), Bakulas (*Mimusops elengi*), Aśokas and excellent Punnāgas (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) all in full bloom. Bees hover round these flowers in great swarms. In some places the penance grove is resonant with (the sounds of) birds embellished with the pollen-dust of full-blown lotuses and moving about among the luscious fruits. In some places the sounds of aquatic birds, water fowls, beautiful gallinules in great inebriation and such other birds are heard. In some places the sounds of ruddy geese are heard; in some places flocks of Kadamba (a dark-grey-winged variety of geese) birds are seen; in some places, the

sounds of Kāraṇḍava ducks are heard and in some places the sounds of overjoyed and excited swarms of bees fill the air.

29-32. It is frequented by the excited and overjoyed bees. It abounds in beautiful and fragrant flowers. In some places there are mango trees with plenty of blossoms and Tilaka (*Symplocos racemosa*) trees overgrown with creepers. It is frequented by delighted birds of different kinds and it is filled with the sounds of the flocks of Hārīta pigeons. Thus that penance grove has a charming look and it shines remarkably.

It appears blue with the dense growth of Nicula (*Barringtonia acutangula*) trees; it is beautiful with peacocks; it is pleasant on account of the chirping sounds of flocks of female birds inebriated and joyous. The overjoyed and excited bees settle down among the branches of the trees in full bloom. It is exceedingly splendid with the beauty of the fresh sprouts and tender shoots. It is rich in excellent fruits. Thus it possesses excessive splendour; it is charming and pleasant in every direction; it is the place where Sage Māṇḍavya performed his great penance. Due to the power of that sage this great Tīrtha is always pure and sacred.

33-36. To the east of it is the great holy hermitage of Sage Gautama. To further east is the hermitage of Sage Cyavana. This first hermitage, O excellent one among sages, is that of Sage Parāśara, your father, a storehouse of penance.

There are different kinds of Tīrthas and hermitages all round belonging to great ascetics on the banks of the river Tamasā. That river Tamasā, it should be known, is very auspicious and remarkably splendid all round with a number of sacrificial posts fixed therein. By taking the holy bath there, by making charitable gifts and by performing Śrāddha rites in particular, one shall achieve all desired objects. There is no doubt about it.

37. The holy bath taken there particularly on the fifteenth day in the bright half of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa is always conducive to the attainment of benefits by men.

38. Hence, O excellent sage, holy bath should be taken ardently by persons with minds devoid of impurities. It bestows all desired objects.

39. Henceforth, I shall recount another great and auspicious Tīrtha on Tamasā. It is well-known as Sītākuṇḍa. It is in the vicinity of Śrī Dugdheśvara.

40. The annual auspicious festival is celebrated on the fourth

day in the bright half of the month of Bhādrapada. For the purpose of attaining all desired objects, Vighneśvara is to be worshipped. All obstacles will be destroyed merely by remembering him.

41. To the south of it is the deity named Bhairava, on seeing whom one is absolved of all sins. There is no doubt about it.

42-44. He is protected by Vāsudeva and kept there honourably for the sake of guarding the holy spot. His worship should be performed duly and with great effort. By showing great reverence to Bhairava, one will obtain all the benefits desired mentally.

The annual festival is to be celebrated on the eighth day in the dark half of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa there for the purpose of attaining all desired objects. Worship along with the offering of an animal should be performed by people. There is no doubt about this that they will attain all desired objects.

45. It is with the favour of Bhairava that the residence in a Tīrtha is free from obstacles. Hence his worship must be performed with great care.

46. To the north of this is the beautiful Bharatakuṇḍa. By taking holy bath here a man is liberated from all sins. There is no doubt about it.

47-53. The holy bath performed and charitable gift offered there shall have infinite benefit. Different kinds of cooked rice should be given. So also different kinds of clothes. The deities are to be worshipped with great care by means of ornaments, clothes etc. Formerly Bharata, the scion of the family of Raghu, the pure soul with fully conquered sense-organs, stayed in Nandigrāma* and meditated upon Rāmacandra. Seated there alone, he, dear to the earth, protected all the subjects.

The king named Bharata made a big Kuṇḍa. After installing Rāma's image, that prince of subdued sense-organs performed (the worship). There is a great merit in that Kuṇḍa. It is associated with various meritorious activities. There are various flowers such as lilies, blue lotuses, white lotuses and red lotuses. It shines with various birds such as swans, Sārasa ducks, and ruddy geese. It is very pure with plenty of shade from the trees of the garden. The holy bath taken there is highly meritorious. It is devoid of impurities and is full of gaiety and bliss. If the devotee performs holy Śrāddha rites and bath with the Pitṛs in view, the Pitṛs become pleased with him. All the deities will be pleased with him.

Mod. Nundgaon close to Bharata Kuṇḍa, 8 miles from Fyzabad (De 138).

54-58. Gold and cooked rice should be given in accordance with the injunctions to Brāhmaṇas. This must be performed with great faith by piously disposed men. To the west of it is the excellent Jaṭākuṇḍa where Rāma and others dropped and removed their matted hairs. Thus Jaṭākuṇḍa is well-known as the most excellent of all excellent Tīrthas. By taking the holy bath here and by making charitable gifts, one attains all desires. In the previous (? eastern) Kuṇḍas Bharata should be worshipped along with Śrī. In the Jaṭākuṇḍa Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa should be worshipped along with Sītā. The annual festival shall be on the fourteenth day in the dark half of Caitra.

Thus in accordance with the great injunctions one shall worship Rāma and Sītā (first), then in Bharatakuṇḍa one shall worship Lakṣmaṇa. The couple should take the holy plunge in the Amṛtakuṇḍa duly. Thereby the devotee dwells in the world of Viṣṇu as an embodiment of meritorious deeds.

CHAPTER TEN

Pilgrimage to Ayodhyā

Agastya said:[1]

1-2. The devotee should worship Ajita (Viṣṇu) by abstaining from food or taking in only milk. Siddhi (spiritual achievement) comes within his hands (power).

The great festival should be celebrated with vocal and instrumental music. An intelligent devotee who does like this and performs the rites in this manner, shall attain all desires.

3-6. To the north of this is the auspicious Tīrtha of Vīra, the great elephant in rut, O sage regularly performing holy rites.

After taking the holy bath, the devotee should stay there in front of it determinedly. He attains the complete Siddhi on realizing which he does not bemoan or regret.

Vīra (Hero, the elephant deity here) is the defender of Ayodhyā and bestower of all desired objects. The annual festival shall be

1. Although the outline of the pilgrimage to Ayodhyā is given in Ch. 8 vv 102-116, a detailed treatment is given in this chapter in vv 1-73.

celebrated on the Pañcamī (fifth) day during Navarātris (Festival of nine days in Āśvina). The deity should be worshipped cerefully by means of scents, incense, flowers etc. and food offerings in accordance with the injunctions. The deity shall be the bestower of all desired objects. Whatever he may desire, he shall attain.

7. To the south of this is the demoness named Surasā. O Brāhmaṇa, she is a perpetual devotee of Viṣṇu. She is a bestower of Siddhis.

8-12. By devoutly worshipping her one shall realize all desires. She was brought from her abode in Laṅkā by Rāma of magnificent activities. She was installed in Ayodhyā for the sake of its defence. People must observe vows and restraints, worship her duly and visit her with great respect. The festival for the sake of realizing all desired objects, bestows auspiciousness. It should be celebrated with great effort by means of vocal and instrumental music.

The annual festival shall be celebrated on Tṛtīyā (third day) during the Navarātris. It is conducive to the attainment of happiness and progeny. It bestows great objects. It shall be made pleasant by means of songs, musical instruments and dances. If everything is done thus, one shall be well-protected always. There is no doubt about this.

13-16a. In the western direction to this is installed a very great warrior of excellent heroism called Piṇḍāraka. He is to be worshipped with great effort by means of scents, flowers, raw rice-grains etc. As a result of this worship Siddhis shall be within the reach of men. The worship of that deity should be performed by men in accordance with the injunctions of worship. The devotee shall take his holy bath in the waters of Sarayū and then worship Piṇḍāraka who deludes sinners and bestows good intellect on men of good deeds always.

The (annual) festival should be celebrated during Navarātris with great luxury.

16b-17. To the west of it, the devotee should worship Vighneśvara by seeing whom not even the least obstacle remains (in the affairs) of men. Hence Vigneśvara, the bestower of all desired benefits, should be worshipped.

18-19. To the north-east of that spot is the place of the birth of Rāma. This holy spot of the birth is, it is said, the means of achieving salvation etc. It is said that the place of birth is situated

to the east of Vighneśvara, to the north of Vāsiṣṭha and to the west of Laumaśa.

20. Only by visiting it a man can get rid of staying (frequently) in a womb (i.e. rebirth). There is no necessity for making charitable gifts, performing a penance or sacrifices or undertaking pilgrimages to holy spots.

21. On the Navamī day the man should observe the holy vow. By the power of the holy bath and charitable gifts, he is liberated from the bondage of births.

22. By visiting the place of birth one attains that benefit which is obtained by one who gives thousands of tawny-coloured cows everyday.

23-25. By seeing the place of birth one attains the merit of ascetics performing penance in hermitage, of thousands of Rājasūya sacrifices and Agnihotra sacrifices performed every year. By seeing a man observing the holy rite particularly in the place of birth he obtains the merit of the holy men endowed with devotion to mother and father as well as preceptors.

NOW THE DESCRIPTION OF SARAYŪ

26-27. It gives infinite satisfaction to the Pitṛs, the devotee gets more merit than that of Gayāśrāddha, if Sarayū is visited. One gets that merit thereby which is obtained by staying in Kāśī for thousands of Manvantaras.

28. By (visiting) the city of the Son of Daśaratha (i.e. Rāma) in Kali Yuga, it is said, one gets that merit which is obtained by persons who perform Gayāśrāddha and then visit Puruṣottama (Jagannāthapurī).

29. If Sarayū is visited, one attains that benefit which a man obtains when he stays in Mathurā for the period of a Kalpa.

30. If Sarayū is visited, one obtains that merit which is obtained in Puṣkara and Prayāga in the month of Māgha or Kārttika.

31. If Sarayū is seen, one obtains that merit which is obtained by means of stay in Avantī for thousands and crores of Kalpas.

32. By visiting the city of Daśaratha's Son in Kaliyuga (even) for half a moment one obtains the merit of taking a holy plunge in Gaṅgā for sixty thousand years.

33. If living beings contemplate on Rāma for a moment or half a moment, it becomes the destroyer of ignorance which is the

cause of the worldly existence.

34. Wherever one may stay, if one mentally remembers Ayodhyā, there is no question of his returning (to the earth) even in the course of hundreds of Kalpas.

35. Sarayū is Brahman itself in the form of water. It always bestows salvation. There is no question of experiencing the effects of Karma here. The man assumes the form of Rāma.

36. Beasts, birds, and animals and all those living beings of inferior species, become liberated and they go to heaven in accordance with the words of Śrīrāma.

37. After saying thus the Pot-born Sage stopped. Then Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana, the ascetic, said once again:

38. "The detailed story in the proper order is not accessible to all the living beings. I have heard the procedure (and the proper order) from the men who come from there.

39. Now I wish to hear about the places of pilgrimage in accordance with the injunctions. O excellent sage, I wish to hear the proper order and procedure of the pilgrimage clearly from you, O ascetic.

40. Even as I ask you for it, describe the benefit in detail and in due order, O learned one, O most excellent one among merciful person, if you have any pity for me.

41. O sage observing regular vows, the most excellent one among those who know the entire universe, do it so that with your favour I can also undertake the pilgrimage."

Agastya said:

42-43. Listen. I shall describe accurately the procedure for the pilgrimage, from the beginning, to Ayodhyā and to the seven Tīrthas in the proper manner and in due order. A pilgrim must be pure mentally, verbally and physically. His conscience must be free from impurities. With the sense-organs under control, he should take the holy baths in the *Mānasa* (Mental) Tīrthas. He who performs the rite perfectly well like this, attains the merit of visiting the Tīrtha.

Vyāsa said:

44. O ascetic, recount the Mānasa Tīrthas where the mind of

those men who take the holy bath becomes pure.

Agastya said:

45. O sinless one, listen as I narrate to you the Mental Tīrthas, by taking a proper bath in which a man attains the highest goal.

46-47. They are: *Satyatīrtha* (Truthfulness), *Kṣamātīrtha* (Forbearance), *Indriya-nigraha* (Restraint of the sense-organs), *Sarva-Bhūta-dayā Tīrtha* (Mercifulness to all living beings), the most excellent Tirtha of *Satyavāditā* (Speaking the truth), *Jñānatīrtha* (Knowledge) and *Tapastīrtha* (Penance). Thus the seven Tīrthas have been recounted. The mind will become pure in the Tīrtha of mercifulness to all living beings.

48. Purification of the body alone by means of water is not implied by the word *Snāna* (holy bath). If the mind of a man is pure he is said to have (really) taken *Snāna*.

Listen to the criterion for the meritoriousness of the terrestrial Tīrthas.

49. Just as some parts of the body are known as excellent, middling etc. so also there are some places on the earth that are proclaimed as exceedingly meritorious.

50. Therefore, one should have his stay in the terrestiral Tīrthas as well as mental Tīrthas.. He who takes his holy bath in both, attains the greatest goal.

51. Hence you too, O leading Brāhmaṇa, undertake the pilgrimage with a pure conscience. Adopt it with great effort. (But) the pilgrimage has not yet been described by me. O eminent Brāhmaṇa, I shall describe the procedure for the pilgrimage in due order.

52. Aquatic beings are born in waters and they die in waters. They are impure in mind. They do not become free from impurities. They do not go to heaven.

53. Unceasing attachment to the objects of sensuous pleasures is called the dirt or impurity of the mind. If the mind refrains from coming into close contact with them, it is called its freedom from impurities.

54. If the mind is internally defiled, holy bath in a Tīrtha does not purify one. A liquor pot is unholy even if it is washed with water hundreds of times.

55. Charitable gifts, sacrifice, penance, cleanliness, pilgrim-

age to Tīrthas, Vedas—all these are holy Tīrthas if the devotee is mentally and emotionally pure.

56. A man who has restrained the group of his sense-organs may stay anywhere. That place is Kurukṣetra, Naimiṣa and Puṣkara for him.

57. Thus, O Brāhmaṇa, the characteristic features of a Mental Tīrtha have been recounted to you. If one takes bath therein all one's holy rites shall be fruitful.

58. An intelligent devotee should get up very early in the morning and take bath in the confluence. After visiting Lord Viṣṇuhari he should take bath in Brahmakuṇḍa.

59. After taking the holy bath in Cakratīrtha, visiting first Lord Cakrahari and then Dharmahari, a man shall be liberated from all sins.

60-62. The pilgrimage undertaken on every Ekādaśī (eleventh) day is conducive to auspiciousness. The intelligent devotee shall get up early in the morning and take his plunge in the waters of Svargadvāra. After performing his daily round of duties he shall visit Ayodhyā. After viewing Sarayū he should visit the Elephant in Rut (i.e. Vīra). He should then see Bandī, Śītalā and Baṭuka. After taking his holy bath in the lake in front of him he shall see Mahāvidyā.

63. After visiting Piṇḍāraka he should see Bhairava. This pilgrimage on the eighth and fourteenth days (of Lunar months) bestows merit.

64. On the Aṅgāraka Caturthī (fourth) day the devotee should visit the deities mentioned before and then visit Vighneśvara for the purpose of attaining all desired objects.

65-68. The intelligent devotee should get up early in the morning and take his plunge in the waters of Brahmakuṇḍa. After visiting Viṣṇu and Viṣṇuhari, he should, with mental, verbal and physical purity, see Mantreśvara and then Mahāvidyā. Then he should visit Ayodhyā for the purpose of attaining all desired objects.

The devotee who has conquered his sense-organs should take bath along with the clothes on. Due to the holy bath along with the clothes one has on, different kinds of sins committed in the course of many births perish. Hence one should take holy bath with the clothes on. Thus the auspicious pilgrimage that dispels all sins, has been recounted.

69. Even in the course of hundreds and crores of Kalpas one

does not return (to the earth), if one performs regularly the pilgrimage that bestows auspicious benefits.

70. Hence you too, O eminent Brāhmaṇa, go to Ayodhyā. Do not delay. After going there undertake the pilgrimage with perfect restraint on the sense-organs.

71. Ayodhyā is the greatest holy place. Ayodhyā is exceedingly great. No other city like Ayodhyā is seen.

72-73. Ayodhyā is the greatest holy place established on the discus of Viṣṇu. Thus what was asked by you has been recounted, O Brāhmaṇa, by me. Resort, O sage, to that and allow me (to proceed) from here.

Sūta said:

74. After saying these things when the Pot-born Sage stopped, Vyāsa, the storehouse of penance, spoke these sweet words:

Vyāsa said:

75-76. I am blessed. I am contented, O sage, I have done my duty. Truthfulness, cleanliness, learning, good conduct, forbearance, straightforwardness—all these are in vain if one does not go to Ayodhyā. Since you who were pleased with me have pronounced the right judgement, I shall go to the pure city of Ayodhyā even now. O great Brāhmaṇa, you too do go back to your own hermitage.

Sūta said:[1]

77-78. After describing the excellent procedure for the pilgrimage in due order, the pot-born sage, Agastya, the mass of penance, went to his penance-grove. The intelligent mass of splendour, Vyāsa, who had conquered his sense-organs, went to Ayodhyā with his eyes beaming with surprise and pleasure like a lotus in full bloom. The Brāhmaṇa went to Ayodhyā for the purpose of attaining all desired objects.

79-82. After proceeding to Ayodhyā he performed the pilgrimage in accordance with the injunctions in due order. On seeing the excellent Tīrtha, the performer of wonderful miracles, he became

1. In vv 77-87 Sūta concludes the present Māhātmya with its *Phalaśruti*.

exceedingly delighted. The intelligent sage ceremoniously sipped the water therein. Then the sage, the great Brāhmaṇa, went to his penance-grove.

The glory was recounted to me by Vyāsa in the due order. I listened to the glory and undertook the pilgrimage in accordance with the injunctions. After coming to Kurukṣetra it has been recounted and reviewed before you.

83. The pure man who reads this matchless glory and listens to this with faith, attains the great goal.

84. Hence this should be listened to with great care always by people. The worship of Brāhmaṇas and Viṣṇu should be performed scrupulously.

85. Gold etc. should be given in accordance with one's capacity to a Brāhmaṇa. He who seeks sons will get sons. He who seeks Dharma will get Dharma.

86. This has been described along with detailed injunctions. It is conducive to Dharma. An excellent man who comprehends this glory of the holy place with great devotion, shall be endowed with prosperity. He goes to the abode of Hari after enjoying all pleasures.

87. He who gives to the expounder of the Purāṇa some time money according to his capacity, vessels, clothes of great beauty and charm, silver, gold and cows shall be liberated.

:: End of Ayodhyā-Māhātmya ::

SKANDA PURĀṆA

BOOK II: VAIṢṆAVAKHAṆḌA

SECTION IX: VĀSUDEVA-MĀHĀTMYA[1]

CHAPTER ONE

Query by Sāvarṇi[2]

Reverential Salutations to Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Henceforth the glory of Śrī Vāsudeva is begun.

Śaunaka[3] *said:*

1. O Sauti,[4] means conducive to the beatitude of living beings such as Dharma (duties pertaining to the different castes and stages of life), knowledge, aversion to worldly desires, Yoga and others, have been mentioned in various ways by you to us.

2. (These were explained) with various kinds of legends and traditional accounts, clarifying them with great perspicuity. O highly

1. This is a text of Pāñcarātra Āgama. The Āgama claims Vedic origin as it is said to be based on the extinct *Ekāyana* recension of the *Śukla Yajurveda*. In this Āgama Vāsudeva is Parabrahman, Nārāyaṇa (*Lakṣmī Tantra* XV.9). Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha are his manifestations. Though these are names of Yādava heroes who lived at the fag-end of Dvāpara Yuga, they are said to represent the self (*Jīva*), the mind (*Buddhi*) and the ego (*Ahaṁkāra*) and as such they are ancient (*Purātana*) and not limited to Dvāpara Age (*Lakṣmī Tantra* VI.12b, 13). Vāsudeva means one who is omnipresent and everything resides in him (VP 1.2.12). He is the Supreme Lord who is glorified in this section. Hence the title *Vāsudeva-Māhātmya*.

2. *Sāvarṇi*: A sage who propitiated God Śiva in Kṛta Yuga and got the boon of being immortal. He was a great author (Mbh, *Anu* 14.103-104). Sāvarṇi, the future Manu is not intended here.

3. *Śaunaka*: A sage of Bhṛgu family, son of Śunaka, author of numerous works like Ṛk-Prātiśākhya, teacher of Āśvalāyana. His leadership in the sacrificial session for 12 years in Naimiṣa forest during which Sauti narrated Mbh (Mbh, *Ādi* 1.19), made him the traditional interlocutor of practically all Purāṇic works at this sacrificial session in Naimiṣa forest.

4. *Sauti*: Ugraśravas, son of Sūta Romaharṣana, the narrator of Mbh to Śaunaka (Mbh, *Ādi* 1.5). He is the traditional narrator of Purāṇic works to Śaunaka.

intelligent one! All of them have been respectfully and attentively heard by us.

3. But they are very difficult to be performed by all human beings. Moreover, achievement of success in them is very difficult to be had on account of numerous intervening impediments (while performing them).

4. It is after a pretty long time that those (means) give results if they are pursued with great perseverance by men of great fortitude.

5. Hence may Your Honour proclaim to us the means easy to all twice-born persons belonging to different castes (classes) and stages of life, as well as to women and even Śūdras (and other low castes) here.

6. (The means should be so easy that) by making the slightest effort any embodied being could accomplish the great Fruit (Mokṣa) without facing any impediments.

7. O highly intelligent one, after deeply deliberating and considering over that sort of means of (accomplishing) Mokṣa, it behoves you to explain it kindly for the good of all living beings.

8. Through the grace of Baladeva, Vyāsa and Janaka you know everything. Be pleased to narrate it to us who are eager and desirous (of knowing it).

Sauti replied:

9. O Śaunaka, the great sage Sāvarṇi had humbly asked Skanda, the son of Śaṅkara, this very question.

Sāvarṇi enquired:

10. O Guha, various kinds of Dharmas, knowledge of Sāṅkhya and means like Yoga (as) explained by you on many occasions, have been heard by me.

11. I certainly regard them too difficult to pursue in case of people like me. Even for others who are great and capable, they can be pursued with great difficulty and yield results after a long period of time.

12. Hence, now it behoves you to tell me that most excellent means which is easy to pursue for people of different classes and stages of life and leads to their spiritual good (Mokṣa).

Sauti said:

13. When Guha was thus asked by that eminent sage desirous of

knowledge, Kārttikeya (Skanda) meditated on Vāsudeva in his heart, and spoke out.

Skanda said :

14. Listen, O Brāhmaṇa, I shall now relate to you what has been heard by me from my father's mouth, the means of attaining Mokṣa, easy for all living beings.

15. To persons belonging to all castes and stages of life, who are eagerly desirous of accomplishing their own cherished objects, there is no other means at all in this world comparable to the gratification of deities.

16. Even if the slightest meritorious act or service is rendered with reference to deities, it confers the great fruit (of the act, probably liberation) on men without any difficulty or impediment.

17. It is due to its association with deities that performance of (ritualistic) acts pertaining to deities, manes, one's own (specific) duty or an act with some end in view, quickly yields accomplishment of what one wishes for.

18. It is due to this that whatever (practice or act) such as Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Vairāgya (indifference to worldly objects) etc. has been previously declared as difficult becomes easy to accomplish immediately.

19. Inasmuch as cherished objectives are achieved only by the propitiation of God, he should be propitiated with love and devotion, to the best of one's capacity, by all men.

Sāvarṇi enquired:

20. O Six-faced Lord, formerly various types of gods have been told by you to me. Various methods of propitiating them have been described by you.

21. All the various kinds of fruits, the chief of which is the attainment of heaven etc., (of those propitiations) have been proclaimed by you. But they are swallowed up (terminated) by Time.

22. O Guha, the fruit such as the attainment of Jana (Loka) and other higher worlds resulting from the propitiation of Brahmā by Yogins who abstain from worldly activities, is also impermanent and transitory, as it lasts for two Parārdhas (100 years of Brahmā) only.

23. What is the propriety of acquiring those fruits with very great difficulties by acts very difficult to perform, if the fruits obtained be perishable?

24. I do not like the propitiation of deities whose body, position and power etc. are perishable in course of time.

25. He who himself is free from fear and eternal is the remover of fear of others. He has a permanent abode and is the donor of eternal fruit and affectionate to his devotees.

26. O Guha, tell me of that god with whose grace all the desires of all (people) will be easily accomplished in this very world.

27. Tell me truly the method of propitiating him which is easy to follow and approved by honourable persons. I am eagerly desirous of knowing this immediately.

Sauti said:

28. Lord Guha who was thus accosted by the great sage (Sāvarṇi) became highly pleased. The noble-minded god respectfully spoke this to him.

CHAPTER TWO

Meeting of Nārāyaṇa and Nārada

Skanda asked:

1. O you expert in making enquiries, O sinless one, you are asking a very great (difficult) question, a reply to which cannot be found in hundreds of years even by great knowers of Brahman, by one's own reasoning, except through the grace of God.

2. I shall tell you what became known to me through the favour of Vāsudeva. There is nothing that should not be told to a person devoted to Dharma, O pious-minded one.

3-4. When the battle of Bhārata was over, the King (Yudhiṣṭhira) having no enemy yet born, asked Bhīṣma who was superior among the knowers of Dharma this very question. He (Bhīṣma) was lying on the bed of arrows. He had attained undisturbed spiritual identity with Acyuta (Kṛṣṇa) through meditation. He was expert both in Vedas and Āgamas.

Yudhiṣṭhira said:

5. If one desires attainment of the four (main) objectives of life (i.e. Dharma, Wealth, Pleasure and Liberation), what deity should be worshipped by one among the four castes (Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya

and Śūdra) and in any of the four stages of life (i.e. Brahmacarya, Gṛhastha, Vānaprastha and Sannyāsa), O (grand)father?

6. What Siddhi (accomplishment) can be obtained without any obstacles? How can it be achieved within a short time? How can a person of a meagre store of merits attain a great position? O grandfather, you are omniscient. Please remove this doubt (problem) of mine.

Skanda said:

7. When asked thus by that pious-souled Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīṣma, the son of Śantanu, looked at the lotus-face of Lord Kṛṣṇa and smiled gently, O sage.

8. Directed to speak by a gesture of his eyes by him (Kṛṣṇa), he narrated the greatness of Vāsudeva as proclaimed by Nara and Nārāyaṇa, as was heard from (his) father.

9. Having heard it, even Nārada went again to Kurukṣetra. He came back to Kailāsa, and narrated it to Father, who in turn told it to me.

10. O guileless one, I shall communicate fully that to you, who (devoutly) enquire about it. O excellent sage, it is decided in a great assembly, and is devoid of all doubts.

11. Vāsudeva, the Supreme Brahman, Śrīkṛṣṇa, the Supreme Man, the God, should be worshipped by men irrespective of their entertainment of desires for objects, or desirelessness, and even by liberated persons.

12. In every way, he is to be pleased with devotion, by means of performance of one's respective Dharmas (specific religious duties), by twice-born castes in their stages of life, and by women, Śūdra and other lower castes.

13. Therefore, all religious and ritualistic acts pertaining to gods and manes should always be done out of love (and devotion) for him in the proper manner, as prescribed in the Vedas.

14-15. Whatever auspicious act is performed by men here for the sake of attainment of happiness—even if it is properly done (in the Śāstric way)—if that act be devoid of its relation with Kṛṣṇa, it should be known as perishable and conducive to little fruit. It lacks excellence of fruit, and due to factors like inauspiciousness of place etc., it is full of defects. It is never conducive to the attainment of men's cherished objects.

16-17. Verily, that act is righteous, if it is performed for pleasing Śrīkṛṣṇa. If related to him, then thereby everything becomes free from

restrictions. It gives imperishable fruit, much more than that desired by oneself. It does not at all become defective in qualities by its contact with impure place etc.

18. O Brāhmaṇa-sage, no impediment can frustrate that (pious) act, from any quarter, through the power of the Discus-bearing Lord. It gives success in the attainment of the object desired by him.

19. Even if one's own merit be scanty, through direct contact with the Supreme Soul, it (merit) gains considerable strength, O Brāhmaṇa.

20. Just as fire, though merely a spark, becomes uncontrollable forest-conflagration through its contact with heaps of wild (dry) wood, so it happens in this case through its contact with Hari.

21. Therefore, persons desirous of proper achievements (of their objectives), should propitiate Vāsudeva, irrespective of their being established in Dharma of the type of active worldly life, or of the (non-worldly) contemplative devotional type.

22. Here, they cite this ancient legend in the form a dialogue between Nārada and Sage Nārāyaṇa.

23. Lord Vāsudeva who is eternally abiding in Brahmaloka, manifested himself through the daughter of Dakṣa from sage Dharma, for the welfare of the world.

24. O excellent Brāhmaṇa, formerly in the Svāyaṁbhuva Manvantara in Kṛta Yuga, he manifested himself in the twin form of Nara and Nārāyaṇa.

25. For performance of penance only for the welfare of men, they proceeded from the hermitage of their father Dharma and both Nara and Nārāyaṇa came to the hermitage of Badarī.

26. There, both the Lords of the world, emaciated with their veins lined like cords, shine with their own refulgence (so much so), that they were difficult to look at even by gods.

27. He, on whom they confer their blessing, deserves (i.e. is capable) to see them. Otherwise, it is not possible to see them, even for residents of their place.

28. On one occasion Nārada, the Yogī, who was desired by them to be seen, was strongly urged to do so in his heart, by their inner soul (will power).

29. From the peak of the great Mount Meru he immediately came by aerial path to the place called Badaryāśrama (the hermitage of Badarī), O Brāhmaṇa.

30. He quickly came there at the time of their performance of daily religious duties. He saw them from afar engaged in the religious

duties of the first stage of life (i.e. Brahmacaryāśrama).

31-32. As soon as he saw the performance of religious duties by those Lords, a great curiosity arose in his mind: 'Wonderful! Both of these great Lords are adorable to all embodied beings. These are veritable Supreme Brahman. What could be their daily religious routine. They are the fathers (progenitors) of all beings, the deity of all gods. What deity or manes could these highly intelligent ones might be worshipping!'

33. Thinking thus in his mind, that devotee of Nārāyaṇa came near him, paid obeisance to him, stood with palms folded in reverence.

34. When their duties (worship etc.) to gods and manes were over, he was seen by them. He was worshipped as per Śāstric injunctions, O sinless one.

35. Having seen that unprecedented, greatly wonderful procedure (of reception), the highly pleased Nārada who was sitting near, became wonder-struck.

36. After having observed Nārāyaṇa properly, with his piously disposed inner soul, he bowed down to him and addressed these words to the Lord.

CHAPTER THREE

Śrī Vāsudeva to Be Worshipped by All

Nārada said:

1. You are being praised in Vedas along with Purāṇas in all their divisions and sub-divisions. O Acyuta, you are the eternal creator, controller. You are the creator and this entire world is always within you (i.e. you are all-pervasive).

2. O Lord, (persons belonging to) the four stages of life, (people of) all castes, everyday adore with (worshipful, ritualistic) acts, you who are abiding in various forms.

3. You are the father, the mother and the eternal God unto all. We do not know whom you worship as father or god.

Nārāyaṇa replied:

4. This esoteric matter should be kept secret with one's own

self. Still, O Brāhmaṇa, I shall accurately explain to you who are devoted unto me.

5-7. Know him only to be our God and parent, who is described in Vedas as the Truth, Knowledge, Infinite Brahman, the Person transcendent to the three *guṇas*, the person of divine personality who is called the Supreme Man, Vāsudeva, the Master, Nārāyaṇa, Ṛṣi (Sage), Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa and the Lord. He is worshipped by us both, regarding him as God and Parent.

8. O Brāhmaṇa, there is no one superior to him as Father (Protector) or God. Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Brahma-pura (-loka) should be known as our soul.

9. He has proclaimed this limit for promoting the welfare of the world, viz. performance of duties pertaining to gods and ancestors.

10. Vedic Karma is of two types—one *Pravṛtta* i.e. pertaining to the active duties (of worldly life), and the other, *Nivṛtta* or abstaining from worldly life. For realizing the objectives in life, it is prescribed according to the capacity of men.

11-12. (Karmas under *Pravṛtta* category are as follows:)

Marrying a woman suitable to oneself by procedure prescribed in Tantra and/or Veda; earning of wealth in a just way; sacrifices involving expenditure of money, but performed with a desired objective; stay in a village or a town; works of personal piety and works of public utility,—all this is *Pravṛtta*, which is said to be not contributory to peace.

13-14. (Karmas under the *Nivṛtta* category are as follows:)

Renuciation of wife, wealth, sex, greed and anger; stay in a forest; indifference to worldly objects; penance; forbearance; equanimity; self-control; recitation of the Vedas; Yoga-yajña; Jñāna-yajña; muttering a *mantra* or prayer as sacrifice—all this has been mentioned as *Nivṛtta Karma*.

15. The movement of the souls of men who perform the *Pravṛtta dharma* is up to heaven in the three worlds.

16. As a fruit of their respective merits, they certainly enjoy various kinds of coveted lordly pleasures in the abodes of Indra, Candra, Agni and others.

17. Having enjoyed pleasures so long as the (balance of) merits lasts, those gods helplessly fall down to the earth again, when (the store of) their merit is exhausted.*

* Cf. BG XI.47.

18. O sage, when their (stock of) merit is exhausted, their enjoyment and prosperity dwindle fast with the passage of time, even if they are unwilling.

19. Even in the case of Devas who are established there as authority, the destruction of their desired enjoyment and lordship frequently takes place with the speed of Time during Brahmā's day.

20. Yogins, the performers of penance who have firm devotion in Nivṛtta Dharma go to Jana and other three worlds beyond (our) three worlds (viz. the earth, the nether world and heaven).

21. As desired by them, they enjoy the pleasures and lordship afforded in those respective worlds. They live equally in happiness, during the daily type of *Pralaya* (world destruction).

22. At the end of two Parārdhas (i.e. one hundred) years of God Brahmā, their worlds as well as their prosperity, pleasures and lordliness, perish with the speed of Time, O Nārada.

23. Now this two-fold Karma, though possessed of Guṇas, becomes devoid of Guṇas, if performed with reference to (i.e. dedicating it to) Viṣṇu.

24. Its fruit is imperishable. It is much more than what is desired by men. Those devotees go to the supreme abode of the Lord from eight (various) modes of life.

25. Hence people with (right) discrimination always do all the acts, whether of the Pravṛtta or Nivṛtta type, (remaining imbued) always with devotion to Viṣṇu.

26-28. O sage, Brahmā, Śiva, Manu, Dakṣa, Bhṛgu, Dharma, Yama, Marīci, Aṅgiras, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vaibhrāja, Vasiṣṭha, Sun-god, Moon-god, Patriarchs like Kaśyapa, Kardama and others, all gods, sages, all castes, and (persons belonging to) all stages of life—all those who have resorted to *Pravṛtta Dharma* (should) worship that very Lord.

29-30. Sana, Sanatsujāta, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumāra, Kapila, Āruṇi, Sanātana, Ṛbhu, Yati and sages like Haṁsa who are steady performers of vows—all these who are established in *Nivṛtta Dharma*, worship that very Lord.

31. Considering gods and ancestors as parts of the person of Vāsudeva, they everyday worship them with the mode of worship free from injury to beings.

32. Wherever these are posted by him according to their powers, whether it is Pravṛtta type of Dharma or Nivṛtta type, they abide by it. In both the cases they never transgress the bounds of morality and

propriety set by the Lord.

33. That Almighty Lord fully supplies whatever is most desired by any of them in the four classes.

34. The Lord, being pleased, gives the great, cherished imperishable fruit (i.e. Mokṣa), for even a slight meritorious act done (unto him) with devotion.

35-36. Out of them, those who, out of devotion to him in the world, are established in devotion solely unto him, and all whose longings for objects other than Vāsudeva are thoroughly exhausted, at the end of their life attain to his domain which is beyond darkness. With their divine bodies they wait upon him with love.

37. Other devotees whose longings and false notions come to an end in due course, by firmness of devotional service also go to him like *Ekāntika* devotees (i.e. devotees who are exclusively attached to a single deity, Viṣṇu).

38. He who is associated with him in whatever manner or capacity, never returns to Saṁsāra anywhere like other living beings.

39. It is due solely to taking resort to him that the attainment of the fruit of Karma Yoga or Jñāna Yoga is quickly accomplished without any impediment.

40. Hence, that very Lord should be propitiated with love and devotion as per proper procedure by all people for the accomplishment of the fruit desired by oneself.

41. Gods Brahmā, Śiva and others attained oneness (and merger) with Brahman without any impediment. The great virtues of the Lord accrue unto him who performs worship of Śrī Viṣṇu.

42. As you entertain constant devotion unto me, O Nārada, I have spoken to you with deep affection, the whole of this esoteric doctrine.

CHAPTER FOUR

Śveta-Dvīpa

Skanda said:

1. He (Nārada) who was the greatest one among persons possessing knowledge of the soul, and who was thus spoken to by the Superme Person Nārāyaṇa, addressed the following words to that Acyuta, the greatest one among the worlds, the very abode of the welfare of the world.

Nārada said:

2. O Lord, whatever has been spoken by you, who have concealed your immense lustre within the form of a sage, has been heard by me completely. But I know in my mind that all this is the sport of you only, who are the Lord of all.

3. O Bhūman (Viṣṇu), I shall have all my wishes fulfilled by your sight only, which is earnestly desired by my heart. I, however, have a strong desire to see your previous (original) form. O Lord, I am curious (to see it).

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

4. That form of mine is not possible to be seen by acts of charity or religious gifts, performance of sacrifices, or practice of Yoga, or by study or recitation of the Vedas, or performance of penance, O Nārada.* It can be seen only by complete, undivided devotion unto me, by excellent devotees exclusively attached to me.

5. Your devotion unto me is undivided; your knowledge is strengthened with disinterestedness to worldly pleasures. That is your Dharma. Hence, you will have that vision which is very difficult to have even by deities including the Lord of gods.

6. I am extremely pleased with your devotion. Today, I assure you that vision. Go to Śveta-Dvīpa (lit. White Island). This desire of yours will be accomplished there, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

7. Having heard the words, Nārada, the son of Brahmā, worshipped that ancient sage (Nārāyaṇa). On an excellent auspicious astrological yoga (astral combination), he flew up in the sky. He at once descended on (a peak of) Meru.

8. Finding a quiet solitary place, the sage stayed for a while on the peak of the mountain. While looking in the north-western direction, he saw an extremely wonderful island.

9. To the northern side of the Milk Ocean (Kṣīrodadhi), there is a famous vast island known as White Island (Śveta-Dvīpa). It is ever-refulgent, radiating very bright, white mass of light spread all over its extent.

10-11. It was surrounded and covered over with innumerable mango trees, *Terminalia tomentosa* trees, Hogplumes (*Spondias mangifera*),

* Cf BG XI.47.

Neem, *Nauclea cadamba*, *Ixora Bandhucca* (Species of Aśoka) Bilva (*Bassia latifolia*), divine trees, *Ficus infectoria*, Banyan trees, Kiṁśuka and sandal trees, *Vatica robusta*, Sāla trees, Bread-fruit trees, Tamāla (*Agati grandiflora*), Ketakas, Campaka, Kunda trees, Jasmine trees, divine *Jasminum zambac* trees—all of which were bent down with (the weight of) flowers and fruits.

12. It was covered with many clusters of wish-yielding trees, and with rows of golden banana trees and betel-nut trees. It was full of innumerable great and excellent parks and gardens, rivers and lakes, full of blooming lotuses and sweetly warbling excellent birds like swans and others, and with excellent fleeing deer.

13. There all living beings, both movable and immovable, lead a liberated life.

While he was observing, excellent devotees of the Supreme Lord were seen by him.

14-16. They were beyond the ken of sense-organs.[1] They were devoid of all sins and (bodily) discharges. They were sweet-smelling. They were two-handed and some of them were four-handed. Some were white, while others were like new clouds in complexion. Their eyes were like petals of lotuses. Their limbs were symmetrical. They were extremely powerful with beautiful heavenly limbs. Their hair were scattered. They were ever youthful and were characterised with all auspicious marks. Their palms and soles were marked with (the outlines of) lotus. They were devoid of six defects of life (hunger, thirst, decay, death, grief and illusion). They surpassed the Sun in lustre. They were clad in white. They were gentle and absorbed in meditation. Even the god of Death was always afraid of them.

Sāvarṇi said:

17. Who are those men who are beyond the range of sense-organs, free from diseases and discharges of the body, full of sweet fragrance? How are persons of such category born? What is their destiny?

18. Śveta-dvīpa is on the surface of this earth, (though) in an ocean of waters. How did you proclaim the state of being beyond the (ken of) sense-organs, in case of the inhabitants of Śveta-dvīpa?

1. Cf. Mbh, *Śānti* 335.8-12 for the description of residents of Śveta-dvīpa. The Purāṇa-writer has idealized Śveta-dvīpa as compared with its description in Mbh. This Dvīpa is located on the earth but the residents are *Akṣara-Puruṣas*. This Dvīpa is a gateway to Goloka and Vaikuṇṭha (*infra* Ch. 7.36-37).

19. Only those who are established in the imperishable Brahman of the form of existence, consciousness and bliss, full of (identical with) pure thought (Brahman), are the liberated ones and not others.

20. Be pleased to remove this doubt of mine. I have got great eagerness (to know). As you are expert in all sorts of discourses, I have resorted to you.

Skanda replied:

21-22. Those persons called imperishable ones (*Akṣara*) who, through their undivided propitiation solely of the consort of Ramā (i.e. Viṣṇu) during previous Kalpas, attained the state of Brahman and have attained agelessness and immortality, stay in this domain of Śvetadvīpa for serving Vāsudeva and are being watched by gods and sages.

23. When the time of world-destruction arrives, they will stay as independent beings in the eternal domain (*Akṣara-dhāman*), free from the fear of Kāla (Death, Time) and Māyā.

24. Even here, those persons as well, who are born of Māyā and hence are perishable, verily become similar to those (*Akṣara Puruṣas*) through pious adorations.

25-27. O excellent sage, persons really become like those (*Akṣara Puruṣas*) through (practice of) non-violence, penance, (by abiding) by one's specific duties, through non-attachment to worldly objects, knowledge of the glory of Vāsudeva and steadiness in (devotion to) the Ātman, supreme devotion (to the Lord), and contacts with the noble-souled ones, even though (originally) they are devoid of service to Hari, have no desire for liberation, and are covetous of all super-natural powers like Aṇimā, but by hearing and describing to each other the birth and great deeds of Śrī Hari (they become so).

28. Even when the creation of the universe is under way, these are not born through the force of Time anywhere. Due to their independence they do not perish like others at the time of world-destruction.

29. Now, I shall narrate to you an ancient legend, O sage, whereby a person belonging to this world, reached that stage.

30. O Brāhmaṇa, the legend that I heard from my father was a long one. It is to be narrated to you today. It is only the summary of it that is remembered.

CHAPTER FIVE

Uparicara Vasu, a Pious King

Skanda said:

1. O sage, formerly there was a king called Uparicara Vasu[1] (lit. 'Vasu who always moved in higher regions'). He was the son of King Āyu[2] and was well-known as Amāvasu. He was a friend of Indra. He got (interested in) devotion unto Lord Nārāyaṇa.

2. He was religious, devoted to his father and propitiated gods and manes. He was engaged in pious conduct, alert and diligent. He was tolerant and envious of none.

3. He rendered assistance to all. He was quiescent, interested in the study of the Vedas (or celibacy), pure, not irascible, moderate in his meals, gentle, free from bad habits, an ascetic.

4. He was unaffacted by pleasure-pain etc., free from passion, bereft of pride, resolute (and self-possessed), and knower of the Self. He was devoid of hypocrisy, gave respect to others. (He was) a Yogī, a performer of penance. He had completely subdued his sense-organs.

5. He was unattached to wealth, sons, wife and other relatives. The king everyday performed devoutly the Japa of Nārāyaṇa.

6. Being pleased with him, Lord Vāsudeva offered him an empire,[3] but he was not interested in it, but propitiated him (Vāsudeva) only respectfully.

7-8. With due attention he used to perform five times the worship of the Lord, according to procedure prescribed in the (Vaiṣṇava) Tantra (prob. Pāñcarātra Āgama). He worshipped gods and manes. He shared what remained (of the previous worship) with Brāhmaṇas and his dependents. And he subsisted on the remaining food. He was devoted to truth and was non-violent towards all living beings.

9. The king knew that consuming flesh of animals was a great sin, and declared so to his subjects.

1. Uparicara Vasu: A pious king of Cedi, a great devotee of Viṣṇu. Indra was so intimate with him that he shared his seat and bed with him (Mbh, *Śānti* 335.17-26). Indra gave him his unfading Vaijayantī garland and a heavenly car and so he always moved in the sky and hence came to be known as *Upari-cara* (Mbh, *Ādi* 63.13-17). Other details of his life are given in this and the subsequent chapters.

2. This Vasu was Āyu's descendant and not son. His father's name was Krti. (PE, pp 808-809).

3. According to Mbh, *Ādi* 63.2, Indra gave him the kingdom of Cedi and not Vāsudeva.

10. He resorted with all heart to Janārdana, god of gods, who has no beginning, middle and end, the imperishable creator of the world.

11-15. The king always concentrated his mind at the feet of Śrī Vāsudeva,[1] and his ears in listening to the story of the Lord. He (devoted) his eyes to the vision of Mukunda, as well as of his devotees. The Lord of the land (king) devoted his speech in praising the qualities of Hari. The king used his nose in smelling the fragrance of Tulasī leaves and flowers, which had touched the feet of Nārāyaṇa, and not any other kind of perfume. He (concentrated) on the touch of the garments enjoyed (used) by the Lord of Śrī (Viṣṇu) to his skin (body). He used his tongue (to take in and enjoy) the food offered to Nārāyaṇa. The king used his feet to go to the sacred precincts of the temple of the Lord, and his hands for the service of Hari.

16. He used his head (the best part of the body) for paying obeisance to the feet of Viṣṇu. He formed intimate friendship with great devotees of the Lord.

17. Not a single moment of the royal sage, who observed the vow of devotion to Viṣṇu, was wasted without (performance of) devotion to the Lord of Ramā.

18. He celebrated with great preparations (and pomp), the festivals of the birth etc. of Viṣṇu. He constructed for this purpose temples, gardens and parks.

19. O excellent Brāhmaṇa, while he was carrying on with such devotion unto Nārāyaṇa, the king of gods (Indra) offered him, of his own accord, participation in his own bed and seat.

20. Indra gave him the most beautiful garland known as Vaijayantī, made of unfading lotuses. He also gave him precious stones and jewels in abundance.

21. Everything, his own self, kingdom, wealth, queen, vehicles, were always looked upon by him as belonging to the Lord.

22. With full concentration of mind and devoutly he resorted to the Sātvata form of procedure, and regularly performed all great sacrificial acts, both with desired objects in view, and as demanded by the occasion.

23. In the mansion of that noble soul, prominent Brāhmaṇas, experts in the Pāñcarātra doctrine, generally used to enjoy food offered to the Lord.

24. While the destroyer of enemies ruled in the righteous way, no

1. VV 11-18 describe how Vasu was an *Ekāntin* devotee of Vāsudeva. These verses explain in a way how to perform such exclusive type of devotion.

untruth was uttered (by him), nor did (his) mind get corrupt, not did he commit the slightest sin physically.

25. For the sake of enhancing his devotion unto the Lord the king daily heard the great Tantra called Pāñcarātra from the mouth of devotees of the Lord.

26. Establishing pure religion and gratifying his subjects, the king protected the earth like Indra taking care of heaven.

27. In his kingdom there was no person of the seven varieties of flesh-eaters (Rākṣasas) nor were there any wearing the garb of atheists.

28. In his kingdom adulterous women and men seducing the wives of others, or perpetrators of promiscuous, irreligious acts (such as intercaste marriages) were not even heard of.

29. While he ruled his kingdom, nobody even smelt the fragrance of eleven kinds of *madya* (inebriating drinks)[1], nor three kinds of *Surā* (spirituous liquors)[2] (a kind of beer—MW).

30. Though he was endowed with these qualities, on a certain occasion he fell down from heaven and entered the bowels of the earth for speaking an untruth out of partiality for the heaven-dwellers (gods).

31. Even while he was within the bowels of the earth, the king, a lover of piety, remained devoted to Nārāyaṇa and was steady in performing the Japa (muttering the name) of the Lord.

32. Through His grace, he was lifted up again (elevated), from the place. After having attained heaven, he enjoyed pleasures as desired by his mind.

33. Through the curse of his manes, he became the king of Cedi (Bundelkhand and a part of Madhya Pradesh in India) on the earth. He performed devotion unto Hari delightfully and alertly in the Pāñcarātra way.

34-35. He then attained heaven. With his divine body the king increased his propitiation of the Lord and great sages and staying there for some time, he attained to the abode of the Lord which is free from all fears.

1. The following verse gives a list of wines of 11 kinds.

pānasaṁ drākṣa-mādhūkaṁ
khārcūraṁ tālam aikṣavam |
mādhvīkaṁ ṭāṅk-mādhvīkaṁ
maireyaṁ nārikelakaṁ ||
samānāni vijānīyān madyānyaikādaśaiva tu |

Wine was then prepared from grapes, datepalm, palm-trees, coconuts, sugarcanes etc. and each product was regarded as a separate kind of wine.

2. The three kinds of Surā are those prepared from honey, gur (raw sugar) and flour (*mādhvī gaudī ca paiṣṭī ca trividhā surā*)

CHAPTER SIX

Fall of Uparicara Vasu[1]

Sāvarṇi said:

1. That King Vasu was a great devotee of the Lord. What lie (deceitful statement) did he utter, whereby he went down from heaven to the bowels of the earth?

2. Who lifted him up again on the earth? Why was he cursed by his fathers. How was the king redeemed then? O Skanda, please narrate it to me.

Skanda replied:

3. O Brāhmaṇa, listen to the story of Vasu who had the brilliance of God Indra. By hearing it, there will be instantaneous destruction of all sins.

4. Formerly, in the Svāyaṁbhuva Manvantara, Indra, by name Viśvajit, began a great sacrifice called Aśvamedha, O sage.

5. Beasts like goats and others were tied there and they were bleating frequently. All the multitudes of Devas were desirous of the taste (of their flesh).

6. By a lucky chance great sages having the refulgence of the sun, came there in the course of their touring of the world for the welfare of the people.

7. They were respectfully received with *Pādya, Arghya* and other items of (formal) welcome. Those sages saw the multitude of bleating sacrificial beasts.

1. The story of the fall of Uparicara Vasu for deciding in favour of *hiṁsā* (killing animals) in a sacrifice is repeated in Vāyu I.57.89-114; MtP 152; Mbh, *Śānti* 337.13-16. It shows the spread of the influence of Ahiṁsā. The original procedure of this Yajña prescribes animal-slaughter (vide HD II.ii. pp 1229-1236 for the procedure of Aśvamedha). The Purāṇa-writer's tirade against this in vv 14-20 and affirmation that *hiṁsā* in sacrifice is against Dharma, shows the social change of attitudes to *Hiṁsā* in the name of religion. Though the present Purāṇa advocates Pāñcarātra doctrine, it differs from the strange belief of Pāñcarātra which advocates animal slaughter in sacrifice on the ground that as the animal attains better world, it is not *Hiṁsā* but protection (*rakṣaṇam*). A great Vaiṣṇava advocate of Pāñcarātra like Rāmānuja states in this connection: *atiśayitābhyudaya-sādhanabhūto vyāpāro'lpa-duḥkhado'pi na hiṁsā, pratyuta rakṣaṇam eva* (*Śrī-bhāṣya* III.1.25)

No comment is necessary!

8. Seeing the violence involved in the paraphernalia of the sacrifice to gods who were of Sāttvika nature, they were extremely wonder-struck.

9. Observing the travesty of Dharma, those paraphernalia, the Brāhmaṇas of virtuous mind, out of compassion, asked the Devas, among whom Mahendra was prominent:

The great sages said:

10. O Mahendra, listen to our speech along with Devas and sages. We declare the essence of the eternal Dhrama as it stands.

11. At the time of the creation of the world, you were created by the great god Brahmā out of Sattva, and you are the upholders of Dharma standing on all the four feet.

12. By means of Rajas and Tamas, he created Manus, kings, rulers of Asuras, the supporters of Dharma.

13. For the guidance of you all regarding the procedure of performance of sacrifice etc., he created the Veda, the conferer of all the desired fruits for the welfare of all.

14. There, in the Veda, *Ahiṁsā* (non-violence) alone has been glorified as the supreme Dharma. The direct killing of a beast is not definitely approved by the Veda.

15. The Veda has the aim of establishing the Dharma of four feet, and not of the destruction of Dharma by committing violence.

16. Kings, rulers of Asuras, however, due to the fault of Rajas and Tamas, and dullness of intellect, take 'a he-goat' etc. as the meaning of "*Aja*" in the injunction "sacrifice should be performed with a sacrificial *Aja*." They did not know *Vrīhi* (rice) etc. (which is its meaning).

17. In your case, who are created out of Sattvaguṇa, the true meaning of the Vedas should be accepted. Otherwise, that kind of performance (involving violence) is not at all proper.

18. The nature of a person conforms to his Guṇa. One's attitude in the performance of a ritual conforms to one's own nature.

19. To you who are Sāttvikas the god is directly Viṣṇu, the consort of Ramā. For his gratification one is authorised to perform a *Yajña* which does not involve any violence.

20. The performance of a sacrifice by actually killing a beast, is contrary to Dharma in your case, O excellent Suras.

21. These performers of sacrifice on your behalf have resorted to Asura type of performance due to their being subjected to Rajas and Tamas Guṇas. They are ignorant of Vedas.

22. It is due to your association with them that such perversity has taken place just now. Certainly, it is due to this, that this performance has been commenced by you.

23. For Asuras and human beings, characterised by Rajas and Tamas Guṇas, there are deities like Bhairava and others, worthy of being propitiated according to the Guṇas (of the devotees).

24. In this world, for the gratification of one's deity of suitable guṇa, conforming to one's own (i.e. devotee's) guṇa, the performance of sacrifice involving violence is enjoined for them.

25. Even out of them, for the Daityas, Rākṣasas and human beings who are devotees of Viṣṇu, Yajña involving violence is not proper. How can it be so, in your case?

26. It is only in accordance with (the injunction of) the Veda that the remnants of the sacrifice are permitted to be eaten by all who have performed the sacrifice.

27. Consumption of liquor and eating of flesh by Sāttvika deities is neither seen by us nor heard from the mouths of saintly people anywhere.

28. Hence this sacrifice should be performed with rice, milk, ghee and other foodstuffs fit for being used in sacrifices, and not with the killing of beasts.

29. Even out of them (the grain of rice etc.), (sacrifices should be performed) with seeds which have attained the state of *A-ja* by their being three years old and from which there occur no germination again.[1]

30-31. It has been proclaimed that non-injury, non-covetousness, self-control, mercifulness to beings, penance, celibacy, truth, non-hypocrisy, forbearance and courage, constitute the form (and content) of the eternal Dharma.[2] He who transgress it, is the destroyer of Dharma and falls.

32. Though they were thus respectfully advised in good moral conduct by the great sages, the knowers of the secrets of the Veda, they (Devas), though acknowledging their authority, did not accept their advice due to its being against their avowed declaration.

33. Self-conceit, wrath, arrogance and other 'descendants' of Adharma, keen to find out (moral) deficiences, entered into them, due to their disregard for the great (sages).

34-35. Now, while they (Devas) were arguing that the term '*Aja*'

1. Cf Vāyu I.57.100-101.
2. Cf Vāyu I.57.116.

means 'a goat' and not 'seeds', and while the disconsolate great sages were again admonishing them, the glorious King Uparicara (Vasu) came there by chance. That intimate friend of Indra was illuminating the quarters by his brilliance.

36. Having seen Vasu passing through the atmosphere coming there all of a sudden, the Brāhmaṇas told the Devas: "He will remove your doubts".

37-40. "This lord of the earth formerly performed thousands of great sacrifices according to the procedure laid down in the Sātvata Tantra and in Āraṇyakas, in any of which (sacrifice) killing of (sacrificial) beasts never took place. There was no adoption of a substitute for sacrificial fees. Nor was there even indirect homage paid to spirituous liquor. The king is known everywhere for his protection of Ahiṁsā (non-violence) and Dharma. He is the leader (i.e. most prominent one) among the devotees of Viṣṇu. He is an observer of the vow of having one wife only. How will this great Vasu, who is such a great religious person, speaker of the truth and expert in the knowledge of the Vedas, speak a word other than the truth?"

41. Having reached such an agreement in opinion (about Vasu), Devas and sages who were eager, immediately approached King Vasu and asked him:

Devas and great sages asked:

42. O king, with what should a sacrifice be performed—with a (sacrificial) beast or with plants, herbs (their products such as grains)? Since Your Honour have been regarded as an authority, please completely remove this doubt of ours.

Skanda said:

43. Vasu folded his palms in reverence and enquired: "Tell me with due deliberation, the truth as to what view is approved by whom."

The great sages said:

44. O ruler of peoples, our view is that a sacrifice is to be performed with grains. But the opinion of Devas is (that it should be performed) with a beast. O king, please tell us your view (in the matter).

Skanda said:

45. Having known the opinion of Devas, Vasu due to his support

of their views then told that sacrifices are to be performed with beasts like goats.

46. He thus supported the view of those who believed in the wrong and evil. Though he was the knower of Dharma, the king spoke the untruth, which was violatory to the Veda.

47. At that very moment the king fell down from the sky due to his faulty (untrue) speech, and immediately entered the earth.

48. The king lying in the bowels of the earth experienced great distress. But due to his refuge in Nārāyaṇa, his memory did not fail (abandon) him.

49. The Devas, residents of Svarga, then set at liberty all the beasts, and being afraid of (perpetrating) violence to living beings, went to heaven and the great sages to their (respective) hermitages.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Uparicara Vasu Attains Liberation

Skanda said:

1. Then the king who was in the bowels of the earth, censured his own act (of giving a false judgement). He deeply repented and paid respect to those great sages. In his mind he muttered the three-syllabled Mantra of the Lord.

2. There, even in the chasm of the earth, the king respectfully and with great devotion, mentally worshipped Hari, the Lord of Devas, five times a day.

3. Then, Lord Vāsudeva, the protector of the world, was pleased with him (Vasu) who, even in adverse circumstances, worshipped him at the proper time and in accordance with the Śāstric injunctions.

4. Lord Viṣṇu, the conferer of boons, spoke of his own accord to Garuḍa, the best of birds, and of great velocity, who was standing near him.

The Lord said:

5-7. O highly fortunate, excellent bird, go by my order. King Vasu, the paramount sovereign of men, a pious soul who has resorted to me, has entered the nether worlds due to his fault of transgressing the Veda

(Vedic injunction regarding sacrifices). Respectful prayer has been made by him. Therefore, approach him today, O Garuḍa. By my order make the king capable of moving through the sky—the king who is concealed in the chasm of the earth and is able only to move beneath (the earth). Don't delay.

Skanda said:

8. Then Garuḍa, of the speed of wind, spread out his wings and entered the chasm of the earth, where Vasu of controlled speech was staying.

9. The son of Vinatā (Garuḍa) lifted him up with his beak and immediately flew up in the sky and left him there.

10. At that very moment, the king regained consciousness and again became one moving in higher regions. Along with his (physical) body he went to Svarga and got the supreme bliss.

11. O Brāhmaṇa-sage, in this way, on account of his disrespect for the truth (or saintly people), by his sinful transgressive speech, a state undeserving to performers of sacrifices was attained by that noble-souled knower of Dharma.

12. Only Lord Hari, the Supreme Man, was served by him (through devotion). Thereby, he got absolved of sins quickly, and obtained (stay in) Svarga.

13. There, he enjoyed different kinds of pleasures as desired by him. He lived there like another Indra, with his praises sung by Suras.

14. On one occasion, Acchodā saw him moving in an aerial car, bright like the sun, accompanied by a divine damsel called Adrikā.[1]

15. She was the mental daughter of the noble-souled, formless manes called Agniśvātta, who dwell in the domain of Soma.

16. The lady of pure smiles did not know her own ancestors due to their formlessness. She thought (king) Vasu as being her father. He too regarded her as his own daughter.

1. Pre-birth has been a popular motif in ancient Indian stories to explain the events of the present times. The Jātaka Tales (Buddhist and Jaina) are examples of the use of this motif in non-Bhāhmanical literature. Brāhmaṇical Purāṇas abound in such tales. The present episode explains the birth of Vyāsa from Parāśara in unmarried state to Satyavatī and her marriage with Śantanu.

The curse of Agniśvātta parents to their daughter Acchodā is used as a motif to explain a "future inevitable event" viz. Vyāsa's birth from Satyavatī in an unmarried state. In Mbh, *Ādi* 63.58 Adrikā became a fish by Brahmā's curse and not by that of Agniśvāttas, the parents of Acchodā.

17-18. Seeing their mutual feelings of such (filial) nature, the manes cursed them: "O daughter, you will be the veritable daughter of this king on the earth.

O Vasu, it is definite that you will be (born as) a human being on the earth and give birth to this (daughter of ours) as your daughter from this very divine lady as your wife.

19. Both of them who were thus cursed by the manes (Pitṛs), bowed down to them, and prayed to them for absolving them from the curse. Then those compassionate ones spoke:

20. "It was due to the inevitability of such events that this curse was incurred by you. But that will contribute to welfare of you both.

21. O Vasu, in the twenty-eighth Dvāpara Yuga, you will be the son of noble-souled King Kṛtayajña on the earth.

22. Even there (on the earth), you will be endowed with all your present qualities, capable of moving in the sky, a leader of the great devotees of the Lord.

23. Having devoutly worshipped Viṣṇu as per procedure of the Pāñcarātra, you, along with your progeny, will worship Devas and us (Pitṛs) with the remnants (of Viṣṇu worship).

24. Then you will attain Svarga with a divine body. Having enjoyed heavenly pleasures, you will get to the domain of Viṣṇu.

25. O Acchodā, you too will be born with a part of yours from Adrikā in the form of a (female) fish. You will be well-known on the earth as Kālī.

26. There, in your girlhood (in an unmarried state), you will have Hari as your son from Parāśara. Through his grace alone you will get enjoyment in life and liberation (after death)."

Skanda said:

27. The king who was both imprecated and blessed by the Pitṛs, having been born of Kṛtayajña on the earth, became famous on account of his virtues.

28. As before (in his previous life), that knower of the procedure of worship of Devas and Pitṛs was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. The great Indra gave his friend (Vasu) abundant wealth.

29. Indra gave him even the Flag of Victory (*Vijayadhvaja*) which was formerly obtained by him from Vāsudeva in Śveta-dvīpa, for destroying his enemies.

30. The king who could move about in the sky enjoyed very rare earthly pleasures. In the end he attained the celestial world (endowed)

with a heavenly body.

31. As a fruit of the balance of his meritorious acts in his previous birth, he enjoyed various kinds of pleasures as desired by his mind. He (then) developed intense aversion to worldly pleasures.

32. In a solitary place, on a peak of Meru, being pure, and sitting firmly on his seat, he meditated in the lotus of his heart on the consort of Ramā, the god worshipped by him with sacrifices.

33. Abandoning that celestial body, the sage, by his Yogic concentration of the mind, reached the disc of the Sun with his subtle body—the disc which is called the gate to salvation to perfectly firm Yogins.

34. His subtle body was burnt down by solar heat and lustre. He became extremely pure and of (i.e. endowed with) a body consisting of existence and consciousness. That blessed one became one whose all residual traces of actions were wiped out.

35. Then by deities faster than wind, who are in the disc (of the sun), he was taken to the wonderful abode of Viṣṇu, called Śveta-dvīpa.

36 37. O sage, though the island is on the earth, it is extraordinary. After having reached this residence of the devotees of Hari by exclusive devotion to the Lord, it serves as a gateway to Goloka, Brahmapura, Vaikuṇṭha to those noble-souled devotees desiring to get to them.

38. O sage, those released from Śveta-dvīpa whose characteristics have been described before, resort to that particular domain for which they cherish a desire.

39. He became endowed with a divine body in that domain when released from Śveta-dvīpa. After reaching the world called Goloka, he obtained supreme delight.

40. In this way, those who propitiate Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Brahman, by the *Ekāntika Dharma* (undivided devotion solely to Viṣṇu) become the liberated ones from Śveta.

41. Thus I have explained, O sage, whatever was asked by you regarding the state of the devotees exclusively attached to the Lord (*Ekāntabhakta*) and the description of Śveta-dvipa.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Curse to Devendra[1]

Sāvarṇi enquired:

1. How is it that sacrifices (involving Hiṁsā) became prevalent again after sacrifices involving injury to animals were given up by Devas at the request of great sages?

2. How is it that the eternal pure Dharma became perverse among ancient and modern Devas, sages and kings?

3. O Six-faced God! A great doubt has been engendered today in me. You are a knower of the truth of all Śāstras. It behoves you to remove that doubt.

Skanda replied:

4. Time (Kāla) is mighty. The minds of the powerful ones who are possessed of desire, anger, taste for liquor, avarice, pride are penetrated by Kāla.

5. Good ideas of men become spoiled by being subjected to anger and pride owing to the transgression of (the advice of) the great ones who speak true and beneficial (words).

6. Even though they are wise, they are intent on doing a criminal act, repent and continuously wander in Saṁsāra.

7. But even Kāla (god of Death, Time) is not able to create aberrations in the mind of those who are devotees of Kṛṣṇa and are devoid of (illicit) desire for pleasure etc., and whose instinctive tendencies have all ceased.

8. I speak the truth that any person who does not resort to proper Dharma (path of virtue), shall never be liberated from Saṁsāra.

9. O most excellent Brāhmaṇa! I shall now narrate to you, the beginning of sacrifices involving violence, as I have heard it from the mouth of my father (Śiva).

10. Here they cite as an illustration this ancient legend in which Nārāyaṇa and Lakṣmī are glorified.

1. In this chapter also the curse motif is used to explain Indra's loss of fortune. The episode is mentioned in BhP and Brahmāṇḍa P. (Purāṇa Index II.106). The object here is to explain why Yajñas involving Hiṁsā came in vogue even after that punishment to Uparicara Vasu.

11. Due to his fault of transgressing great sages, the power of mentally perceiving rightly what is good, was lost by Indra called Viśvajit, O sage.

12. Sage Durvāsas, a part of god Śaṅkara, a performer of penance, once happened to go to the river Puṣpabhadrā during his course of wanderings in the worlds.

13. There he saw the wife of a Vidyādhara named Sumati surrounded by her friends. She came down from heaven for water sports.

14. She was called Madakalā ('one singing softly as if intoxicated'). She was holding in her right hand a very fragrant garland of golden lotuses from the Heavenly Gaṅgā.

15. Seeing her, the sage approached her. Like an intoxicated person, he requested for the garland held by the Vidyādhara lady.

16. Knowing his greatness, she immediately bowed down to him, and out of great respect, she made him wear the garland round his neck.

17. Being highly pleased in mind, the sage went away singing like an inebriated person. On his way, he saw Devendra coming to the great river.

18. His victories were being praised in sweet musical voice by divine damsels and musicians (Gandharvas). He was riding a royal elephant.

19. He saw Indra who was lost in the ecstasy of hearing the sweet (vocal) music of Rambhā, whose eyes were fixed on her lotus-like face and looked splendid, embellished as he was with (royal) umbrella and *chowries*, but he was not looking at him (Durvāsas).

20. Seeing him, the son of Atri (i.e Durvāsas), laughing like an intoxicated person, hurled at him the garland he was wearing round his neck.

21. Indra who was already possessed (as it were), due to his contact with Adharma (unrighteousness), was then overcome with passion, placed it on the temples of the elephant. The royal elephant, with his mind attracted by the fragrance, pulled it down with his trunk.

22. From his trunk it fell down on the ground. The elephant crushed it under his feet while he was walking—all this happened while the great sage, a storehouse of penance, was looking on.

23-26. Then the infuriated Durvāsas, with his eyes red like the fire appearing at the time of world-destruction, spoke to Indra:

"O intoxicated wicked-souled one, addicted to licentious pleasures, you are arrogant. You do not welcome the garland, the abode of Goddess Śrī, given by me out of love (for you). You intoxicated fellow do

not pay me obeisance, O fool. You do not take cognizance even of me who am the only person who (can) teach a lesson to an arrogant and inebriated fellow like you. You have become blind by getting the kingdom of the three worlds. Now I shall teach you properly. Goddess Śrī, with whose favour you are enjoying the kingdom of the three worlds, has abandoned you along with the three worlds and is submerged in the sea."

27. As soon as he heard his (Durvāsas') words terrible like a stroke of thunderbolt, he at once jumped down from the elephant. With his pride humbled, Hari (Indra) fell at his feet.

28. Trembling and bowing down again and again, he prayed: "Compassionate as you are, it behoves you to show favour unto me."

29-31. He (Durvāsas) spoke out, "O Śakra, I am not verily a sage (like) Gautama.[1] Know me to be Durvāsas who is the very essence of non-forbearance and wrath. Other sages spoiled by you are your followers. But I, a desireless sage, have no regard for worms like you. Is there a sinner in the whole of the universe who is not afraid of me, of my brilliant mass of matted hair, and my (angry) sight with curved eyebrows?"

CHAPTER NINE

Genesis of Yajñas involving Hiṃsā

Skanda said:

1. O sage, under the influence of Time leading to the perversity of Dharma in future, he (Durvāsas) said, "I will not forgive" and went to Kailāsa.

2. Goddess Śrī also then disappeared from the three worlds into the sea. All the celestial damsels in a body left Indra and followed Śrī.

3. Penance, Purity, Mercy, Truth, Pāda (?), True Dharma, Prosperity, Supernatural Powers, Strength, Sattva (quality of goodness)—all of them followed Śrī.

4. Vehicles, elephants and others, ornaments of gold etc., pre-

1. Gautama did not spare Indra for his affair with his wife Ahalyā. He did curse Indra whereby he became goat-testicled (VR I. 49.2-10).

cious stones etc. and metal implements decreased.

5. Within a short time foods, plants, herbs, oils, greasy substances became scanty. No milk was generated in the udders of milk-giving beasts of which cows, she-buffaloes were prominent.

6. From the mansion of Kubera, even the nine treasures[1] disappeared. Indra along with multitudes of Devas became like ascetics.

7. All materials of enjoyment came to an end in all the three worlds. Devas, Daityas and human beings were afflicted with poverty.

8. The moon became devoid of its lovely brightness, and became like water in the ocean. There was a terrific drought which ruined completely seeds and grains of corn.

9. Repeatedly crying out 'Where is food,?' men emaciated with hunger and bereft of strength, left villages and towns and resorted to forests and mountains.

10. Being overwhelmed with hunger, some of them killed animals, both wild and domesticated, and ate their flesh, either cooked or uncooked.

11. Learned men and sages who followed the true Dharma did not eat flesh, even though they were being starved to death.

12. Seeing them taking to fasting and starvation, old sages along with Manu taught them Dharma to be followed in adversity as proclaimed by the Vedas.

Most of the sages whose sense-organs had become confused due to hunger gave perverse interpretation of the Vedas.

13-15. They took a word like *Aja* to means as a goat and exhorted, "O Brāhmaṇas, perform (animal) sacrifices. The violence (Hiṁsā) prescribed by the Vedas is not a fault or violence resulting in sin[2]. Therefore, kill auspicious (sacrificial) beasts in the name of Devas and Pitṛs. Enjoy the flesh (of any animal) desired by you after it is consecrated with sprinkling of water and dedicated to deities and manes as Naivedya. But do not kill animals for your own sake."

16. Then Devas, sages, kings and men who were thus taught by them performed according to their capacities sacrifices, except those who were solely devoted to Hari.

1. The following are the nine treasures of Kubera: Padma, Mahāpadma, Śaṅkha, Makara, Kacchapa, Mukunda, Nanda, Nīla, and Kharva. They are also personified as the attendants of Kubera or Lakṣmī.

2. This has been the stance of Mīmāṁsakas, Pāñcarātrikas i.e. Vaiṣṇavas like Rāmānuja.

17-18. They performed sacrifices like *Go-medha* (bull-sacrifice), *Aśva-medha* (horse-sacrifice) and sacrifices of which *human-sacrifice*[1] was prominent and enjoyed the flesh that was left over after the sacrifice.

19. Some performed sacrifices for wealth that is lost. Some performed for obtaining women (wives), sons and house and some for (the prosperity of) their profession.

20. Those who were unable to perform great sacrifices, killed on various occasions animals intending them for their Pitṛs (manes) in Śrāddhas and ate them and made others do so.

21. Some people living on the shores of seas or banks of rivers, caught fishes with nets and became eaters of them (fish).

22. O sage, by killing animals of which cows (bulls) and goats were prominent for the sake of distinguished guests, they served it to them.

23. At that time, in the absence of wealth, houses etc., and due to promiscuous mixture of Dharmas, no rule of marriage between individuals belonging to the same caste was observed.

24. In accordance with the damands of times (and new trends), for the sake of enlargement and continuity of one's race, Brāhmaṇas married daughters of Ksatriyas (and other castes) and Kṣatriyas and others married daughters of Brāhmaṇas.

25. Thus in that great calamity, sacrifices involving Hiṁsā were commenced. Dharma itself followed Goddess Śrī (to the bottom of the sea), while a semblance of Dharma remained.

26. *Adharma* along with its consequents pervaded all the three worlds and thrived within a short time. It was extremely difficult to be checked by the wise and learned people.

27. There were numerous children produced by those poverty-stricken people and the extensions of their families increased greatly in the world.

28. Those who became learned among them regarded it (i.e. Adharma, the then prevalent practices) as the real Dharma, and wrote treatises accordingly.

29. Those treatises became authoritative in due course by the power of tradition. In the first Tretā Yuga Dharma took such an evil turn.

1 The Purāṇa-author seems to be ignorant of the fact that human-beings were never killed in the so-called *Nara-medha*. Western scholar like A.B. Keith and others have specially pointed out that this *Nr-Yajña* or *Manuṣya-Yajña* is 'Honouring Guests'. For details vide Kane, HD, II.ii, Ch.XXI, pp. 749-56.

30. Then onwards, killing of animals in Yajña (sacrifices) and on other (religious) occasions gained currency. It was only in Satya (Kṛta) Yuga that there prevailed the eternal Dharma.

31. After a long time, Indra, the Lord of Devas, along with Devas, propitiated Lord Vāsudeva and regained his prosperity, O sage.

32. Then through the grace of Hari, the Lord of Śrī and the seat (refuge) of Dharma, the real Dharma spread about in the three worlds.

33. Still there are some Devas, sages, and men whose good minds are adversely affected by sex, anger, greed and relish for (non-vegetarian) taste, who regard the *Āpad-dharma* (i.e. practices allowable in time of distress) as the main Dharma.

34. Devotees of the Lord, who have conquered their passions, and who are solely devoted to the Lord, do not take to them (those practices) even while under duress. What to say of other occasions!

35. Thus, O brāhmaṇa, I have narrated to you how in the first Kalpa, sacrifices involving Hiṁsā (violence) became prevalent.

CHAPTER TEN

The Grace of Śrī Vāsudeva

Sāvarṇi said:

1. O Skanda, how was Goddess Śrī, who was submerged in the sea, regained by Indra? Tell me the whole episode associated with Nārāyaṇa.

Skanda said:

2. Devendra who was devoid of Śrī was defeated by Dānavas who themselves were bereft of Śrī. He was deprived of his position and all the retinue.

3. Along with the Lords of (different) quarters like Varuṇa and others he wandered in different mountains, valleys, places overgrown with creepers and forests.

4. They wore garments made of barks and skins. They consumed the flesh of animals and birds. The behaviour and garments of Devas, Daityas, men and reptiles (Nāgas) were all alike.

5. In all their homes the utensils were made of earth only. Women

(wives) of all of them were wretched and miserable like female Piśācas (ogresses).

6. At first there was total absence of rainfall for twelve years on the earth. Then during the course of a year there were few showers at some places, while there was none elsewhere.

7. In this way they passed one hundred years in poverty and suffering. But due to their powerful destiny they did not die even in extreme misery.

8. They lived like hellish beings in hells but were almost dead. Even though they tried to gain Śrī by performing sacrifice etc., they did not succeed.

9. Then at the end of one thousand years Devas who were beggarly-attired due to the curse of Durvāsas, sought refuge in God Brahmā.

10. Devas including Indra and others, paid obeisance to him and narrated the tale of their misery. But due to his omniscience he already knew the plight of the Suras.

11. God Brahmā, along with Śaṅkara who was capable of warding off his misery, censured Indra and expressed the desire (to Indra) to propitiate Viṣṇu.

12. By his penance he (Indra) propitiated him, to whom penance was dear. Then he, accompanied with all categories of Devas, went to the Milk-Ocean.

13. On the beautiful northern shore of that ocean, they who had taken the vow of fasting, performed penance, standing on one leg with arms raised up.

14. With their minds concentrated, they meditated in their heart on Keśava, Vāsudeva, the consort of Lakṣmī, the destroyer of all troubles and miseries.

15. At the end of a hundred years Lord Viṣṇu, Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself, showed favour unto the poor Devas who were extermely miserable.

16. He whose form was invisible even to self-knowing performers of great penance, manifested himself out of grace with the brilliance of a million suns.

17. At first, a very brilliant disc of refulgence suddenly flashed forth. All the Devas saw that unparalleled white cloud.

18. God Brahmā and Śiva espied within it the Four-armed Lord of Ramā, of bluish-dark complexion like a cloud, holding in his hands a mace, a conch, a lotus and a discus.

19. He was adorned with a crown, a girdle, bracelets of gold, earrings etc. He was wearing yellow silken garment and his person was divinely beautiful.

20. With their minds overwhelmed with ecstasy, both of them prostrated themselves like a staff. Devas seeing him through his desire (to be seen by them), bowed down to him with joy.

21. Like a penniless person getting a treasure-trove, they became overjoyed. With their palms folded in reverence, all the Devas devoutly praised him.

Devas prayed:

22. Oṁ, obeisance to you, O venerable Lord Vāsudeva. We meditate upon you. Bow to you, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Saṅkarṣaṇa (i.e. all the Vyūhas of Vāsudeva).

23. (Obeisance to you) of the form of Oṁkāra, Brahman who have manifested your threefold form, the cause of the creation, maintenance and destruction of the Cosmic Egg, one devoid of (three) Guṇas.

24. (Bow to you) whose form gives delight to the eyes, the destroyer of the troubles of those who bow down to you; obeisance to you Keśava, the form of the supreme being.

25. Bow to (you) Kṛṣṇa who give delight to all his devotees, the fascinator (deluder) of Kāla, Māyā and others, who are forever delightful, who abide by the proper Dharma.

26. Obeisance to you who are famous as being capable of saving persons who are submerged in the ocean of worldly existence, to one of beautiful form, dark like a cloud.

27. Repeated obeisance to the wielder of the mace, lotus, conchshell and discus with your long arms, the protector of Devas, cows, Brāhmaṇas and of Dharma.

28. Bow to the most excellent one, the bestower of desired boons to those who seek refuge, one worthy of being known through Vedas and Āgamas, and who are the essence of all Vedas.

29. We pay obeisance to you, O Viṣṇu, whose resplendent, beautiful form exists within a halo of light, who are greater than the greatest.

30. Repeated obeisance to you, the great one, whose greatness is far beyond the ken of speech and mind, who are of imperishable form, who abide within the hearts of all.

31. You alone are the one who give happiness to those who resort to you. Hence we who are deeply troubled by great adversity, have sought refuge in you.

32. Due to our offensive behaviour towards Durvāsas, a devotee of the God of Gods, we became bereft of Śrī and have been reduced to this wretched plight.

33. O Lord, abandoning us who are devoid of clothes, food, drink, residence etc., even Dharma went away along with Śrī. You are the Supreme Lord to protect us.

34. Inasmuch as it is well-known that we as well as Dharma are yours, it behoves you to restore us to happiness as before.

Skanda said:

35. The Lord, the store of mercy, who was thus implored by Devas, addressed the Suras, delighting them with a voice deep like the rumbling of a cloud.

The Lord said:

36. All the misery suffered by you on account of your offensive behaviour towards the good (sage Durvāsas) is known to me. I shall advise you a remedy for removing it, upon which you act this very day.

37. After throwing all medicinal plants in the sea, you, along with Asuras, churn it with Mount Mandara (as the churning rod) and (Vāsuki), the king of cobras, as the strap (to churn it).

38. First enter into an agreement with Dānavas, and then begin the churning of the ocean. I shall help you. You need not get depressed.

39. After getting the Nectar and the (favourable) glance of Śrī, you will be much more brilliant than before. Daityas who are averse to me, will be the sufferers.

Skanda said:

40. After saying this, Viṣṇu, destroyer of the distress of his devotees, vanished. Devas bowed down to him and began to act according to what he had said.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Churning for the Nectar[1]*: Birth of the Poison Kālakūṭa*

Skanda said:

1. Having ordered Mahendra and others ot have consultation with Asuras, Gods Brahmā and Rudra went to their respective residence.

1. The belief in the existence of an immortality-giving liquid medicine and how it was churned out of the sea by Devas and Asuras and how the Asuras were cheated by Viṣṇu in a female form is found in most Purāṇas and Mbh.

And Devas went to the earth.

2. Indra who was expert in making speech suitable for bringing about an understanding, tempted them (i.e. Asuras) with the offer of a share in the fruit (of the joint effort) with (arguments of) skilful stratagems of policy and entered into an agreement with the Asuras.

3. Then multitudes of Devas and Asuras gathered on the shore of the sea. Bringing huge quantities of medicinal plants of great potency they quickly deposited them in the sea.

4. Then they approached Mount Mandara[1] which looked splendid with various kinds of medicinal plants. All of them got eagerly engaged in uprooting it from its bottom.

5. As they could not uproot it, since it had roots eleven thousand Yojanas deep in the earth, they praised Hari.

6. Knowing it, the Lord ordered Saṅkarṣaṇa, the Lord of the earth, to extract the mountain which was firmly rooted.

7. Immediately with one hissing only, the Lord hurled it from that piace to a distance of two Yojanas.

8. Seeing the extremely wonderous feat, all Suras and Asuras were highly delighted. Shouting loudly, they went a-running and reached near it.

9. Powerful and endowed with arms like iron bars for locking doors, they could not lift it up to carry, though they tried their best. Due to the fruitlessness of their labour, they became sad.

10. The Lord who sees everything, knew that all the multitudes of Devas were dejected. He ordered Garuḍa to take it immediately to the sea.

11. He (Garuḍa) who was powerful enough to hold (lift) the Cosmic Egg along with its sheaths, and whose speed was like that of mind, came there and with his beak he lifted the mountain, deposited it near the sea and returned to Hari.

12. Then all the sons of Kaśyapa (i.e. Suras and Asuras) with delighted minds visited Vāsuki with a solemn promise to give share in the Nectar.

13. Then all of them went to the sea. They became ready to churn

1. A hill in the Banka sub-division of Bhagalpur District, two or three miles from Bamsi and thirty miles south of Bhagalpur. It is an isloated hill about seven hundred feet high with a groove all around in the middle to indicate the impression of the coil of Vāsuki around it while churning the ocean. But the marks of chiselling show the artificiality (De 124) Mbh, *Vana* 139.5-6, *Droṇa* 87.33 locates it near Kailāsa.

it, when the sea presented himself in person and spoke as follows:

14. "O Suras and Asuras! If you will give me some share of the Nectar I shall bear the torments of the churning with Mandara."

15. Promising him to do so, they first threw in it medicinal plants and creepers, and wound the king of Nāgas (Cobras) round that golden mountain.

16. Then Devas remembered Hari in their hearts for (getting) success in the undertaking. Acyuta who sees everything came there the moment they remembered him.

17. The multitude of Devas became glad at his sight. They stood there holding the front part (i.e. mouth) of the Lord of snakes, with the Lord's approval.

18-19. Showing his partiality to Devas, the Lord stood where the Devas were standing. But then the Daityas became enraged. "We are senior in penance, learning and age (to Devas). How should we hold the inauspicious (dirty) lower part of this (i.e. serpent)? We are not such fools."

20. (As if) showing respect to them, Viṣṇu, along with Devas laughed loudly and giving the front part (mouth, to Asuras), made Suras hold the tail (of Vāsuki).

21. The Daityas did not know that his act of the Lord of Śrī was (for) the protection of the immortal ones (Devas) from the heat of the poisonous hissing of the great snake.

22. Then, the sons of Kaśyapa (Devas and Asuras) with their ends of lower garments tucked into the waistband and fastened with leather straps, raised up the golden-peaked Mandara resplendently dark like a big black bee.

23. Shouting loudly and extremely eager, they placed that mountain of twenty-two thousand Yojanas in height, into the sea.

24. The mountain, though held up by them, had no support below. Due to its extremely heavy weight, it went down to the bottom (of the sea). And they were greatly agitated.

25. Then the Lord himself who always carries out the tasks of his devotees, was praised by Devas. The Lord in the form of a tortoise lifted it (the mountain) from below.

26. As soon as they saw it lifted up, the hearts and faces of them all bloomed with joy. The mountain became stable on the very extensive back of the tortoise.

27. Then the Devas and others with all their power, churned the ocean very fast with incessant hissing sound of exhaustion coming out

of their mouth.

28. While the mountain was being whirled (round and round), many trees fell down and the fire generated from their friction burnt down lions and others.

29. Many aquatic animals were pounded down by the great mountain and met death by hundreds in the Milk-Ocean.

30. The roaring sound of the churning was loud like deep thundering sound of a multitude of Saṁvartaka clouds (appearing at the destruction of the world). And it (i.e. roaring sound) was intensified with its echo.

31. By hissing and puffing out of the mouth of Vāsuki, whose body was distressed and exhausted by powerful pulling, the Daityas became bereft of power and extremely exhausted and shone like burning coals.

32. They constantly suffered (from) the unbearable poisonous fire. The thousand mouths of the king of serpents dropped down through fatigue.

33. Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa (Śeṣa) of great lustre bore the poisonous fire and at once held them (i.e. the mouths of Vāsuki) up as directed by the Lord (Viṣṇu).

34. From the ocean that was being churned for one thousand years, there came out the poison Halāhala[1] spreading to all the quarters and sub-quarters.

35. They (Suras and Asuras) whose bodies were constantly scorched by the poison called Kālakūṭa which burns down the three worlds, ran away.

36. Then God Brahmā, Devas, Protectors of Prajās, all of them praised Śiva, the consort of Umā, praying to him for drinking up the poison.

37. The Lord told him, "you were born first and are the seniormost of the Devas. This poison is born first out of the ocean. Hence you take it."

38. The merciful Śiva, seeing the fright of Devas and due to the order of Hari, sucked up, by his yogic power, the whole of the poison on his palm.

39. He drank it up and absorbed it in his throat. Hence he became known as blue-throated and a beneficent god.

40. The drops that fell from his hand while drinking the poison, were taken up by serpents, scorpions and some medicinal plants.

1. Also known as Kālakūṭa, the creation of this deadly poison while churning the ocean and its subsequent swallowing by Śiva is described in many Purāṇas and Mbh.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Churning of the Ocean: Birth of Fourteen Precious Jewels

Skanda said:

1. Then the sons of Kaśyapa became delighted (as the poison was drunk up). They gathered at the place of churning. They again went on churning the Ocean for a thousand years.

2. While the Ocean was being churned by all of them, there emerged nothing. The participants in churning gasping for breath with their mouths, became slack (through fatigue).

3. The great serpent Vāsuki experienced feebleness and frailty of life. At the time of churning Mandara also could not keep up a stable condition.

4. Seeing them all bereft of strength, Pradyumna,[1] authorized by Viṣṇu, entered the Devas, Asuras and the king of serpents (Vāsuki) and infused strength in them.

5. Even Aniruddha approached the king of mountains and with his thousand arms, stood like another big mountain.

6. Being wonder-struck at the restoration of extreme energy, the multitude of Suras and Asuras joyously and energetically churned the great Ocean.

7. At the gesture of Nārāyaṇa, Devas and others did not experience any fatigue. With the rhythmic pulling the churning (operation) looked splendid.

8. While the big Ocean was thus stirred and shaken up, the exudation and extracts of medicinal plants flowed into it all round.

9. From the reservoir of water which was in that stage (of being churned), there emerged the Moon who is called the presiding deity of loveliness and medicinal herbs.

10. Then the Cow Havirdhānī, the presiding deity of all cows, the yielder of the wishes of all, with a lustre like the moon, emerged.

11. Then a white horse, the presiding deity of all horses, manifested. Airāvata, the king of elephants, endowed with four tusks and of moon-like lustre came out.

12. Then came out the heavenly tree Pārijāta, the king of all trees.

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1. This being a Pāñcarātra work, inclusion of help from the different Vyūhas, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, is brought in. Mbh and other Purāṇas do not mention them, as for them the persons named as Vyūhas were Yādava heroes at the end of Dvāpara.

Then the excellent gem, the lotus-hued ruby called Kaustubha, emerged.

13. Then were born (i.e. came out) Apsaras (i.e. celestial damsels) who were the receptacles of beauty. Then was born Goddess Wine, the goddess that inebriates all.

14. Then came out the Śārṅga bow, the presiding deity of all weapons. Then emerged Pāñcajanya,[1] the conch, the supreme deity of all musical instruments.

15. Then the Moon-god, Pārijāta as well as the bevy of celestial damsels resorting to the solar path, stood there instantaneously.

16. The leaders of Daityas immediately took hold of the king of horses and Vāruṇī, while Indra, the king of Devas took Airāvata with the consent of Hari.

17. The (gem) Kaustubha, the (Śārṅga) bow and the conch (Pāñcajanya) went over to Viṣṇu only. All of them gave Havirdhānī (cow) to sages.

18. While the Ocean was being churned again, Śrī herself directly manifested herself delighting with her glance the three worlds, surpassing the splendour of all.

19. All Suras, Asuras, men desired to get hold of her but nobody could approach her brilliance and power.

20. Knowing her to be Śrī, by her holding a lotus in her hand, Vāsava and God Brahmā and others, who knew her, were highly delighted.

21. The Ocean himself in person immediately came there and saying 'This is my daughter', took her in his lap, and occupied a golden seat.

22. While the Ocean was being churned by those powerful and firm (determined) seekers of the Nectar, the Nectar did not come out.

23. Then being disappointed regarding the emergence of the Nectar, they became slack in their efforts. O sage, the sons of Kaśyapa (i.e. Devas and Daityas) of faded faces became dejected.

24. Seeing them in that state, the Lord, the storehouse of compassion, the all-pervading Lord laughed and himself became ready to churn.

25. He was resplendent with the yellow garment, the end knot of which was tightly fastened with a jewelled girdle. He caught hold of the serpent in the middle by his (two pairs) of hands.

26. Daityas who caught hold of the mouth of the serpent stood on

1. BhP X differs. Kṛṣṇa killed the aquatic damon Pañcaja or Pañcajana who abducted the son of Sāndīpani (Kṛṣṇa's preceptor). After killing Pañcajana, Kṛṣṇa took away the conch in which Pañcajana lived. (PE 548)

one side and all the Devas who held the tail of the serpent stood on the other side.

27. The Lord who stood between them sportively churned the Ocean, giving delight to the eyes (of all) with ornaments of his hands becoming (brightly) visible.

28. God Brahmā staying in the firmament along with prominent sages, showered him with flowers, uttering the sound (words) "Be victorious; be victorious."

29. Then, from the Ocean that was churned was born a man Dhanvantari with a part of Viṣṇu. He was fair in complexion, was holding in his hand a pitcher containing Sudhā (Nectar).

30. Taking with him Amṛta (Nectar) which was the best essence of all ghee and other juices of plants and medicines, he went near Śrī.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Gods Drink the Nectar

Skanda said:

1. All the participants in churning who were seeing the emergence of Dhanvantari (with the pitcher of Amṛta), saw from a distance Dhanvantari coming near Śrī.

2. Seeing the gold pitcher containing Nectar being held in his hand, the Asuras suddenly pounced on it, and snatched it away, O Brāhmaṇa.

3. Out of them, those who were powerful (enough) seized it, and ran off with it. The weaker ones, running after them, protested in the name of decorum and manner of proper behaviours (as follows) :

4. "Oh! Such unrighteous and wicked deed should not be committed by righteous-mided persons. It (the Nectar) should be drunk after giving it to Devas, the equal partners in the labour (of churning out Nectar) and not otherwise."

5. Disregarding that speech (appeal), they quickly ran far away. Even there, they were forcibly pulling each other's hands (for securing the Nectar).

6. While they were proclaiming and crying about "I am the first and not you", "I am the first, not you", "I shall drink it (first)", they did not get the opportunity to drink.

7. Then, on seeing the Nectar snatched away by the Daityas,

Devas became pale-faced. Being incapable of preventing them, they sought refuge in Acyuta.

8-9. "Protect us, O Lord of the world; do protect us. All our possessions are destroyed. All the Nectar has been taken away by Daityas. What shall be our fate? Even without imbibing Nectar, they are sufficiently capable of killing us. If the Nectar is drunk by them today, what shall we do?"

Skanda said:

10. Having heard the pitiable condition of the Devas, the Lord who performs the tasks of his devotees, told the Suras, "Don't be afraid" and was intent to take back the Nectar from Asuras.

11. After assuming a marvellously beautiful feminine form that enchanted all the world, he approached the Daityas and played with a ball.[1]

12. Seeing that beautiful form, they were fascinated and were overwhelmed with the passion of love. Giving up their mutual struggle, they approached and spoke:

13. "O blessed lady! Take this pitcher of Nectar and distribute it amongst us. We are the sons of Kaśyapa; O lady with beautiful buttocks, make us all drink it (Nectar)."

14-15. Requesting her thus, they handed it over to the lady who was reluctant. She spoke, "No faith should be entertained in me, as I am a self-willed (i.e. wanton) woman. You have done an improper act. I shall, however, distribute it as per my will." Though she told them so, those stupid ones said, "Do as you please".

16. Then in compliance of her order, Devas, Daityas, Vāsuki sat there in rows, each keeping with his particular group.

17. While they were arranging themselves into groups, Mohinī sat on a golden seat at a distance, facing the rows of gods.

18. Keeping the pitcher of Nectar near her, she, casting her glances here and there in a woman's sportive way, sat for a moment like an indifferent, impartial person.

19. The leaders of Dānava group, of whom Vipracitti was prominent, were suspicious in their minds about Mohinī and hence they seated themselves near the Devas.

20. Approaching quietly and evading deceitfully her glance, the

1 This is Mohinī, the 13th incarnation of Viṣṇu, who deluded the Asuras, refusing them their share in Amṛta and distributing it among Devas.

wicked-souled ones carried away the pitcher of Nectar again and were desirous of drinking it in a secret place.

21. Nara and Nārāyaṇa came there accompanied by sages. Both of them saw the Dānavas stealing away the Nectar.

22. Instructed by Nārāyaṇa, Nara at once stopped them.[1] Snatching away per force that pitcher, he quickly handed it over to Mohinī.

23. Then with a desire to kill Nara, Dānavas took up their arms and attacked him. There was thus a great disorder in the ranks of Asuras.

24. Thereupon, the powerful Lord Nara, the fearless one, unconquerable by Devas, Daityas and human beings, single-handedly fought with them.

25. In the meanwhile Viṣṇu who had assumed the form of Mohinī went about quickly and made all the Devas who were sitting in rows, drink the Nectar.

26. Even then Rāhu, a Dānava, entered (the unoccupied place) in between the Sun and the Moon and sat in the row of the Devas, without being noticed by anyone.

27. When Mohinī came sprinkling the Nectar in his (Rāhu's) mouth, both the Sun and the Moon indicated it to her by the glance of their eyes.

28. Therefore, the Lord who had assumed the highly illusory form of a woman, cut down his head containing Nectar (within his mouth) by his discus, which came there as soon as remembered.

29. Hari established it (Rāhu's head) in the planetary position, for the peace of the people, as that mountain-like head was swallowing people while shouting loudly.

30. After having made Suras drink the Nectar, he assumed his male body. The Lord and the Devas fought with Dānavas.

31. On the shore of the Ocean there took place the battle of Devas who grew extremely powerful by imbibing Nectar, and were helped by Viṣṇu, with Asuras.

32. In that tumultuous battle, the Asuras who were being killed by Nara, Indra and others, fled away and entered the earth (nether world).

33. When the Sun set, all the multitudes of Devas came near Śrī and had a great joy at her sight.

1. According to Mbh, *Ādi* 19.19-31, Nara helped Devas in fighting against Asuras after Devas drank Amṛta. Post-Amṛta-drinking fight by Nara is also mentioned in v 32 below.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Marriage Festival of Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa

Skanda said:

1-8. There came (for the marriage-ceremony of Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa) the following:

God Brahmā; the Lords of created being; Śambhu; Manus; great sages; (twelve) Ādityas; (eight) Vasus; (eleven) Rudras; Siddhas; Gandharvas; Cāraṇas; Sādhyas; (forty-nine) Maruts; (the group of ten gods called) Viśvedevas; presiding deities of quarters; the two Aśvins; the Fire-god; the Moon; Dharma; the Prajāpati himself; Garuḍa; Kinnaras and other groups of gods; serpent-devotees of Viṣṇu; of whom Śeṣa was the first, wives of all the Devas (such as) Sāvitrī, Pārvatī, Pṛthivī, Sarasvatī, Śacī, Gaurī, Śivā, Saṁjñā, Ṛddhi, Svāhā, Rohiṇī, Dhūmorṇā (wife of Yama), Aditi and the lawful wives like Mūrti, Dayā and others; Arundhatī, Śāṇḍilī, Lopāmudrā, Anasūyā and other pious wives of sages; (Rivers like) Gaṅgā, Sarasvatī, Revā, Yamunā, Tapatī (Tapti in north Maharashtra), Candrabhāgā (Chinab), Vipāśā (Bias), Śatadru (Sutlej), Devikā (Devā? or Gogrā), Godāvarī, Kāverī, Kauśikī (Kosī), Kṛṣṇā, Veṇī, Bhīmarathī, the great river Tāmraparṇī, Kṛtamālā (Vaiga near Madura, Tamil Nadu), Vitastā (Jhelum), Nirvindhyā (Kālī-Sindh in Mālvā), Surasā, Carmaṇvatī (Chambal), Payoṣṇī (Pain Gaṅgā), Viśvā and others.

9. All celestial damsels, of whom Raṁbhā, Ghṛtācī, Viśvācī, Menakā, Tilottamā, and Urvaśī were prominent ones came there.

10. All the residents of Vaikuṇṭha as well as all the inhabitants of Goloka and important attendants of Viṣṇu came there with great delight.

11. All the eight supernatural powers beginning with Aṇimā (Levitation), and nine treasures beginning with Śaṅkha, Padma in their corporal forms came near Śrī.

12. At that time, for the pleasure of Śrī, full autumnal moon removed all the darkness of the night and the quarters became resplendent.

13. In compliance of the order of God Brahmā, Indra began (the preparations for) her ablution. Tvaṣṭā immediately constructed a very beautiful hall (created for the ceremonial occasion).

14-15. It was furnished with long rows of thousands of pillars decked with jewels. It was beautified with innumerable wonderful canopies and with plantain trees. It was adorned with rows of heavenly wish-

yielding trees bent down with sweet fragrant flowers. It was beautiful and fascinating in its various parts.

16. It was shining brilliantly with crores of rows of bejewelled lamps of resplendent light. It appeared bright with arches (beautified) with suspended pearl-laces.

17. Seating Śrī on a bejewelled throne there, great sages performed her ablution, preceded by vocal and instrumental music.

18-19. Airāvata, Puṇḍarīka, Vāmana, Kumuda, Añjana, Puṣpadanta, Sārvabhauma, Supratīka—these elephants presiding over eight cardinal points, making a roaring sound, raised up auspicious gold pitchers and showered her with waters[1] brought from seas in four quarters.

20. Great rivers in their embodied forms brought waters. Vedas, assuming personal forms, recited Mantras along with sages.

21. Sweet-voiced Gandharvas sang. Bevies of the celestial damsels danced. Other groups of Devas played on musical instruments.

22. There was a great joy all over the three worlds to all embodied beings. Brāhmaṇas recited Vedic Sūktas of which Śrīsūkta (i.e. RV I.165) was the first. Ladies sang songs.

23. Clouds played upon musical instruments such as instruments of bell metal for beating time. Tabors (Mṛdaṅga drums), instruments called Gomukha, Paṇava, large military drums called Ānaka, Dundubhi drums resounded in heaven.

24. There was a shower of saffron accompanied with shouts of victory. For her personal service were the lawful wives (of sages) and supernatural powers (in person).

25. The Ocean gave two yellow-coloured silken garments and abundant invaluable bejewelled ornaments to her who had taken that auspicious bath.

26. Indra brought to her a seat worthy of being occupied by her. Viśvakarmā gave her bangles and rings set with excellent jewels.

27. The Moon, her brother, offered her an excellent ornament for the nose (nose ring), and also gave her ornaments set with excellent jewels for her hair.

28. The Lotus-born (God Brahmā) gave her a lotus and Sarasvatī presented her a pearl necklace. Nāgas of whom Śeṣa was prominent bestowed on her two ear-rings set with the best of jewels.

29. Durgā gave her collyrium and saffron symbolic of good fortune

1. Icons showing Lakṣmī being bathed by elephants are found since the Śuṅga period (N.P. Joshi, *Bhāratīya Mūrti Śāstra*, p.219). Here the Purāṇa employs eight elephants instead of two usually found in these old icons.

(securing the favour, firm devotion and long life of the husband). Sāvitrī gave her an ornament to be worn on the forehead, Śacī gave her a betel-box.

30. The season Spring presented her a flower-garland. Śaṅkara gave her a necklace. God Varuṇa gave her the garland Vaijayantī. Kubera bestowed upon her a bejewelled mirror.

31. The Fire-god gave her an invaluable bodice, while Yama bestowed an auspicious umbrella. Others presented her ornaments suitable for the occasion.

32. Then the Ocean asked God Brahmā, "To whom should I offer this daughter endowed with excellent ornaments?" The omniscient Lord then replied:

33-37. "O storehouse of waters! This your daughter is the mother of mine as well as that of Śiva. It is definite that she is the mother of all Devas and the worlds. She has no other husband than Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, the Supreme Brahman, the Lord of all, the excellent Puruṣa. Therefore, O Ocean, for the felicity of the three worlds give her in marriage with proper (religious) procedure to the Lord who has arrived here in person and taken his seat. By giving her (in marriage) to the Supreme Soul, make your life successful by making your family pure and lift it up from the ocean of Samsāra. (Though) you are one, you are known in the world by your seven forms due to the division by seven *Dvīpas* (continents). By doing this (i.e. offering in marriage), you will obtain great fame."

38. Addressed thus by God Brahmā, the Ocean who was delighted and had the hair standing on end, regarded himself as blessed and gave his daughter to Viṣṇu.

39. Then after requesting the Lord as per procedure, he performed betrothal (*Vāgdāna*) and other details. He thus completed the sacred precepts pertaining to marriage-ceremony.

40. In the marriage celebrations, Dhanvantari, the Moon-god, Indra and other deities were on the side of the Ocean-god there.

41. They were the chief ones in bestowing (things like) clothes, ornaments, vehicles, serving of meals and rendering honours to the relatives of the bridegroom.

42-43. In the auspicious rite of the marriage-ceremony of Lakṣmī, the following were the prominent ladies: river-goddesses of which Gaṅgā was the first; spouses of Devas beginning with Śacī; wives of Mountain(-gods) like Menā (the wife of Himālaya); Supernatural powers beginning with Aṇimā; Kānti, the lovely wife the Moon-god; and all

celestial nymphs, O sage.

44. Then God Brahmā performed the sportive marriage-ceremony of Nārāyaṇa suitable to and in consideration of his parents Dharma and Mūrti.

45-46. "This Dharma is the support of the world. He is adorable to all embodied beings. He is worthy of being his father. He is excessively in love with him.

This Mūrti who is well-known as the source of origin of all virtues, this daughter of Dakṣa, the lawful wife (of Dharma) deserves to be (Nārāyaṇa's) mother."

47-48. Then, even on the side of Dharma, participating in the marriage duties these were the prominent ones, O sage: (they were) God Śaṅkara accompanied by Nandīśvara and Gaṇeśa, great sages including Marīci, the lords of subjects (Prajāpatis), the sage Nārada, Vainateya (Garuḍa) and attendants including Nanda and Śrīdāmā.

49. Durgā, the deity of speech (Vāṇī) who is the mother of Vedas, wives of sages including Anasūyā and all *Dharmapatnīs* (lawful wives) were the prominent ones among the ladies.

50. God Brahmā along with Vedas and others, and Brāhmaṇas who were expert in the Vedas and the procedures of the marriage-ceremony, were on both the sides.

51. Then, the Ocean, with the favour of Śrī, immediately procured all the requisites, causing wonderment to Devas.

52. He saw that whatever he intended (to have) in his mind, it was instantaneously brought near him. He was, therefore, highly delighted.

53. In the middle of that (marriage) hall, he caused (the construction of) the altar for establishing the (holy) fire (in it) by Brāhmaṇas learned in the Vedas.

54. He decorated the altar with sandalpaste, flowers, (unbroken) grains of rice etc., and with auspicious colours and waterpots containing sprouts.

55. Then Viṣṇu who was bathed by prominent sages chanting Mantras accompanied by the loud tumultuous sound of auspicious musical instruments, wore invaluable clothes, bejewelled ornaments and a splendid celestial crown.

56. With all the quarters reverberating with the sound of the musical instruments and the sweet songs of dancing celestial ladies he came along with eulogizing Suras to the ceremonial hall and sat on a seat of gold.

57. The Ocean along with his dearest wife Gaṅgā washed his (i.e.

Viṣnu's) lotus-feet with the stream of excellent water flowing from the spout of a golden pitcher (of a particular shape), and carried that water over his head along with (the heads of) those of the members of his family (by sprinkling it over them).

58. Then reciting loudly the auspicious verses (relevant to the occasion), God Brahmā made the Ocean-god give (in marriage) Śrī to Acyuta. Enkindling the sacred fire as per injunctions, he offered oblations (to the marital fire) along with sages.

59. After giving him his beautiful daughter who had fixed her sight only on his lotus-feet, he presented the great being numerous rich garments and bejewelled ornaments along with the daughter.

60. Then Hari circumambulated the duly oblated sacrificial fire along with Śrī, attracting awhile the minds of men and women onlookers.

61. The multitudes of gods, along with their wives, worshipped with reverence, the beautiful parents of the universe occupying the same seat, presenting to them invaluable garments and ornaments.

62. Goddesses including Durgā and others and wives of Devas including Śacī, whose beautiful faces were beaming with smiles, sang auspicious songs describing the excellences of Viṣṇu.

63-64. The multitudes of the wives of Devas seated in two groups facing each other, sang with great love and devotion, festive nuptial songs at the sight of the couple in such a way as on hearing them all Suras, great sages, all womenfolk saw the Lord along with Śrī shining within themselves, and they sat (still and motionless) as if drawn in a picture.

65. Paying obeisance with devotion and offering ceremonial *akṣata* (unbroken grains of rice) etc., the Devas joyously eulogized them individually, with excellent words, humbly folding their palms with reverence.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Eulogy of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa

Brahmā said:

1. After having constantly meditated upon the Vedas, I have arrived at the decision that, if living beings entertain firmer devotion

unto you, the delight of Ramā, they will enjoy an unending and never decreasing multitude of pleasures, and that they attain to worlds, the ultimate destination of which is the Supreme Person.

2. Not knowing this, they propitiate us, Devas, through various kinds of penances, worships, even though we are (ourselves) possessed of the qualities of Rajas and Tamas. Hence they are called stupid, O Keśava. I, therefore, cherish you in my heart.

Śaṅkara said:

3. O Lord! The Three Vedas, Sāṅkhya, Vedānta, Yoga, Purāṇa, Pāñcarātra as well as Dharmaśāstra—all these devoutly sing in various ways the supreme majestic glory of yours alone.

4. In the first Kalpa (Ādi-Kalpa), it is from you, the great one, alone that these Śāstras were born and they have you as their only resort, O Sovereign Lord. I betake myself to you and worship you, the Primordial One whose lotus-feet are served by Ramā, who are the source of the origin of Śāstras.

Dharma said:

5. A talk about you is a releaser from the bonds of Saṁsāra. It is like nectar to embodied beings who are tormented by the three kinds of miseries (namely, *Ādhibhautika, Ādhidaivika, Ādhyātmika).* It is a destroyer of sins accumulated during innumerable births. Devotion unto you instantly enhances knowledge.

6. O Lord of innumerable names! May it (i.e. a talk about you) issued from the mouths of saintly persons, forever enter into the valley (in the form) of my heart, through (my) ear. It should remove every (other) wish except the one for you. Salute unto you, the ocean of mercy, the mighty one.

Prajāpati said:

7. Blessed are these wish-yielding trees, the shade of which has been resorted to by you along with Śrī. Blissful is the creator (builder) of this hall (of your marriage-ceremony). Beatified is this earth where your seat stands, O Lord.

8. Verily this Ocean is blessed in this world, (inasmuch as) his own daughter was given unto you directly by him. Blessed are these—we—who behold you. We have paid our obeisance to you, the blessed Lord, the consort of Śrī.

Manus said:

9. O Lord of Lakṣmī! That Dharma certainly is superior to all (others), the Dharma wherefrom pure devotion unto you, the support of Dharma, is engendered.

10. We praise you, the soul of Dharma, the leader and protector of Dharma, the source of Dharma, to whom Dharma is dearest, O Lord.

Sages said:

11. He who is devoid of devotion is averse to you; (being) desirous of knowledge he exerts, yet does not achieve success. He is, therefore, attached to Karmas for a desired object. How can he attain imperishable joy, O ocean of bliss?

12. Hence, we, filled with faith and devotion, (practising) Dharma, penance and Vedas (Vedic studies), meditate upon you who are beyond Māyā, the controller of Kāla (Death or Time), the noble one, the Lord of Śrī, senior to the senior ones.

Indra said:

13. Really, due to our insulting behaviour towards Durvāsas we became extremely miserable. With your exception, none of these gods like Brahmā, Rudra and others were able to protect us, O Lord.

14. Devoid of all wealth and wanting in food we were reduced to a condition on par with destitutes on the earth. By you only we had our miseries removed instantly. Obeisance to you, O Śrī Hari.

Fire-god said:

15. The food that is the means of subsistence to Devas, Dānavas and human beings, is created by you only. Therewith learned men offer oblations in sacrifices to you, and the remnant is carried (offered) to other inhabitants of heaven.

16. Those performers of sacrifices, though interestedly engaged in acts for realization of desires, get quickly freed from the bondage of Karmas and attain to the Brāhmī state. The others (i.e. non-sacrificers) are thieves. I bow down to you, Śrī-Yajña-Puruṣa (Viṣṇu).

Maruts said:

17. By rendering service to you, the imperishable, supreme sta-

tion, devotees exclusively attached to you, do not crave for houses, prosperity etc. (regarding them) as low, nor do they desire for the final emancipation full of excessive happiness. It is proper that they regard their birth in a family of Cāṇḍālas as the excellent one. We have approached you, the great person, the refuge of devotees, who are exclusively attached to you.

Siddhas said:

18. We pay obeisance to you who alone, though causeless, are the cause of creation (sustenance and destruction) of innumerable Cosmic Eggs (Brahmāṇḍas), to you who are immanent in them yet transcendent and their controller.

Rudras said:

19. Obeisance to you, the Supreme Person, who, though yourself free from delusion, are the enchanter of Māyā, the deluder of all and who are Kāla (i.e. destroyer) even of Mahākāla (the great destroyer of the universe).

Sun said:

20. O Lord of Ramā! Illuminated by you, we lighten the worlds. We have bowed down to you who are self-luminous, of great refulgence, the very light incarnate.

Sādhyas said:

21. You are the ruler (and controller) of kings, great serpents, kings of Daityas, of Devas, of Manus, Prajāpatis. We repeatedly salute you, the Supreme King of Kings.

Vasus said:

22. Whenever there is a destruction of the proclaimed eternal Dharma and its followers by persons (born) with Asura portions, then, every time, you incarnate of your own accord. We bow down to the protector of Dharma.

Cāraṇas said:

23. Devotees sing (the praise) of the auspicious deeds of you who have assumed innumerable forms in various poetical compositions. It

(the poetic composition) instantly purifies the hearer as well as the speaker. We have bowed down to you of auspicious fame.

Gandharvas and celestial damsels said:

24. O Lord! Those who, leaving aside your episodes, describe or listen to the laudatory verses about others, become miserable and get sewn (bound) with the bonds of Saṁsāra. We salute you, a worthy resort.

The Ocean said:

25. O unconquerable Lord! If anyone serves with delight your people (devotees) even once with a little of wealth, water, food, garments, bows, he attains a high position, even if he be of a low status. I salute that merciful one.

Pārṣadas (Viṣṇu's attendants) said:

26. You are our parents; you are (our) relative; you are our beloved teacher, friend and protector; you alone are our ruler; you are the highest (to us); you are our entire wealth.

Mūrti (Nārāyaṇa's mother) said:

27. I always adore in my heart you, the ruler of Goloka, you, through association with whom, women, Śūdras, Asuras, birds and beasts of low categories and even wicked-souled beings attain to a high status praised even by the great ones and abandoned by whom even the lords of Devas immediately become bereft of worship (unfit to be worshipped).

Sāvitrī said:

28. At the time of the creation of the universe, you have created by your glance Prakṛti and Puruṣa, creating through them, these *Tattvas*, (primary) substances or principles beginning with Mahat; you created many Virājs.

29. Assuming the creatorship of the world in the form of Vairāja (Brahmā), you created Devas, Asuras, human beings, serpents, movables and immovable beings, O Lord. I seek refuge in you, the first creator.

Durgā said:

30. O omnipresent Lord! In this world those who perform your meditation in their hearts with excessive love and devotion do not desire for the happiness of Brahmā (or of Brahmā's post), or the pleasure in heaven or the position of being the sole sovereign lord of the earth.

31. Having obtained this incomparable bliss conferred per force by you (upon them), they, the powerful ones, do not give it up even for a moment. I bow down to such a Lord of Sātvatas.

Rivers said:

32. O grantor of boons! Today we have approached you, Nārāyaṇa who protect from the fear of birth, death and Yama, people who, knowingly or unknowingly, perform a mere bow unto you or the glorification (or recitation) of your name, O friend of Nara.

Wives of Devas said:

33. The birth of you who have assumed a body on this earth, is auspicious. Your deeds are wonderful and sanctifying to the world. As you are the attributeless Brahman, everything pertaining to you becomes devoid of all attributes.

34. By resorting to you, people who are characterised even by Tamas, Rajas and Sattva attributes, become attributeless. Hence we worship (you) who are devoid of attributes.

Wives of sages said:

35. The lotus-feet of Viṣṇu, that is of yours, are the only pacifiers of all difficulties of people afflicted with extremely calamitous torments of three types. Hence, we have approached you as refugees, O infinite God of gods.

Pṛthivī said:

36. I seek refuge only in Vāsudeva whose face is like the full autumnal moon, whose eyes are long like lotus-petals in autumn, who relieves immense sufferings due to separation from Śrī (wealth).

Sarasvatī said:

37. My eyes have been (as if) transformed into Cakora birds with

reference to your extremely beautiful moon-like face. They do not go elsewhere. May this form of yours abide in my heart and no other!

Skanda said:

38. Thus praised by all gods, he welcomed them by his glance only. He spoke to Śrī, "O auspicious lady, give a (favourable) look to these gods."

39. With a pleasing look all the residents of the three worlds were glanced with favour by her. They became prosperous as before.

40. Householders as well as renouncers, all got back their own (previous) prosperity. Dharma and others began to move with delight as before.

41. The Lord offered his chest as the place to Śrī. Stationing herself there, she pervaded the three worlds with her affluence.

42. Then the Ocean (lit. 'the mine of jewels') as a consequence of being the progenitor of Śrī, became true to the meaning of his name by becoming the abode (*Kṣaya*) of all jewels.

43. There he respectfully satisfied all the guests with nectar-like excellent food of four varieties of very good flavour.

44. With great pleasure, he presented to all (guests) including Devas individually valuable garments, bejewelled ornaments and other paraphernalia.

45. At that time, for the satisfaction of his son-in-law, there was nothing that could not be given to his relatives, in the case of the Ocean who was showering wealth like a cloud.

46. The Lord also distributed among Brāhmaṇas all the abundant wealth given to him as dowry, and vanished along with Śrī.

47. Suras were excessively delighted by Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa. Gods including Indra, went to heaven and others went to their respective homes.

48. Getting back their respective powers as before, all of them became happy through the grace of the Lord of Kamalā (Lakṣmī).

49. By the order of the Lord Garuḍa again took back Mount Mandara to his place and fixed him there sportively.

50. O Brāhmaṇa-sage! In this way the prosperity which was lost through the curse of a Brāhmaṇa, was got back by Indra through the grace of Nārāyaṇa.

51. O sage! He who hears this holy story of the Lord and who extols it observing religious restraints, both of them will get riches.

52. By (listening) to this there will be attainment of wealth to householders. To the recluses there will be attainment of devotion, spiritual knowledge, disaffection from worldly pleasures and others, as desired by them.

53. In this way I have narrated to you, O Brāhmaṇa, how Indra got back his prosperity. I shall tell you everything as to how Sage Nārada went to Śveta Dvīpa. Listen with concentrated mind.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Description of Goloka[1]

Skanda said:

1. Ascending the peak of Meru, Nārada with his divine vision saw Śveta Dvīpa and thousands of liberated souls thereof.

2. Concentrating his sight on Lord Vāsudeva, the great Yogī soared up that very moment and immediately arrived at that place.

3. Reaching the great Dvīpa (continent) Śveta, Nārada was delighted in his mind. He saw those very auspicious devotees who were white-complexioned and had the lustre of the moon.

4. He worshipped them with his head (bowed down), and was mentally adored by them. Being desirous of seeing the Supreme Brahman, he stood there embarrassed (lit. in a difficult situation).

5. Knowing that he (Nārada) was a devotee exclusively of Viṣṇu, those Bhāgavatas ('followers of the Lord') were delighted (i.e. satisfied) in their minds. While muttering the twelve-syllabled (Mantra of the Lord), they spoke to him:

The Śveta-muktas ('Liberated Śvetas') said:

6. O prominent sage! You are a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Hence you (are able to) see us who are difficult to be seen even by Devas. What desire torments you?

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1 This is the uppermost of the divine worlds. It is regarded as the upper lip of Viṣṇu, the lower lip being Brahma-loka (Mbh, *Śanti* 347.52) The description of Goloka in Mbh, *Anuśāsana* 83.37-44 is somewhat different from what is given here. This Goloka is the replica of the Vṛndāvana region where Kṛṣṇa spent his boyhood in the cowherd community. The same persons—cowherdess Rādhā, her companions, Kṛṣna's playmates, his Rāsa dance, cows etc., are super-divine in the Goloka of this Purāṇa.

Nārada said:

7. I am very eager to see Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Brahman himself, the ruler (of the universe). O great devotees who are dear to him, show him (to me).

Skanda said:

8. Then one white liberated soul, being directed by Kṛṣṇa in his heart, said, "Come, I shall show you Kṛṣṇa". Saying this, he proceeded ahead.

9. Then the highly delighted Sage Nārada went up with him by the path in the firmament, seeing the dwelling places of Devas.

10. Seeing the Seven Sages (*Ursa Major*) and the Polar Star, he was not attached anywhere there. He crossed the regions known as Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

11. Then, after seeing the region of god Brahmā, the sage who followed the Śveta-mukta, found his way even through the eight sheaths (of the universe) due to the wish of Kṛṣṇa.

12. Having successively crossed (the sheaths of) the elements, viz. earth, water, fire, wind, and ether, Ego (*Ahaṁ*), *Mahat* and *Prakṛti*, each of which is ten times (larger) than the previous one,[1] he arrived at the wonderful Goloka.

13. It was the glorious abode, accessible only to those exclusively devoted to Hari. While going he saw the extensively wide and fathomless river Virajā.[2]

14. It has the fragrance of sandal due to the bath taken by multitudes of cowherds and cowherdesses. It appeared beautiful with lotuses white, red and blue in colour.

15. He arrived at its bank which was extensive, attractive to the mind, full of crystal-stones. It was beautified with excellent precious stones of white, green, red and yellow colour.

16. It was full of rows of wish-yielding trees. It was beautified with coral-sprouts. It was adorned with mines of precious stones, like *syamantaka*, sapphire and others.

1. It is a Purāṇic concept that our universe is enveloped by (sheathed in) the five elements, Ahaṁkāra, Mahat and Prakrti. A Yogī has to pierce his way through them before attaining Brahman (symbolised here as Goloka).

2. According to *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*, Virajā was a cowherdess (a mistress of Kṛsna) who was converted into a river by Rādhā's curse. In Vaiṣṇava Vedānta it is the river after crossing which one visulizes the Lord.

17. It was extremely beautiful with steps (of the *ghats*) studded with excellent gems of various kinds. It was occupied by swans, Kāraṇḍava ducks (and other aquatic birds) warbling sweetly.

18-19. Its splendid, translucent water was being drunk up by multitudes of wish-yielding cows, excellent elephants and horses. He crossed it. Having crossed in a moment the heavenly river which formed a moat round the Lord's residence, through the will of the Lord, he arrived at Mount Śataśṛṅga ('having a hundred peaks').

20. It was of gold and beautiful. It was ten million Yojanas in height. Its extent was hundred million Yojanas and was attractive to the mind.

21-22. It was adorned with (the growth of) thousands of wish-yielding trees and trees like Pārijāta and others, and creepers like Mallikā, Yūthikā (varieties of jasmine), cloves and cardamoms. It was beautified with trees such as golden plantain trees, and also multitudes of heavenly deer, elephants and sweet-warbling birds.

23. In his castle-like abode on the beautiful peaks, he saw mind-attracting *Rāsa-maṇḍapas* (i.e. halls for dance called Rāsa) of the Lord spread out.

24. They were surrounded by series of gardens, fragrant with flowers in full bloom. They looked beautiful with gem-set panelled doors in four directions.

25. They were furnished with wonderful arched doorways, and with thousands of pillars studded with jewels. They were provided with pillars of plantain trees and windows with wreaths of pearls suspended thereon.

26. They were provided with auspicious Dūrvā grass, fried grains, unbroken rice grains and fruits. The quadrangular places therein were sprinkled with sandal, agallochum, musk and saffron.

27. They were appealing to the heart, with various kinds of sweet sounds of musical instruments pleasing to the ears (and hence worth listening). He saw there crores of multitudes of cowherdesses.

28-30. They were adorned with invaluable garments and ornaments, with bangles studded with excellent jewels, girdles, anklets, armlets and rings. They were endowed with youth and loveliness of form and features, and with incomparably sweet voice. Their complexion was like that of Rādhā and Lakṣmī and (had) amorous hands. In the hall provided with various articles of enjoyment, they were amusing themselves and singing pleasing songs about Kṛṣṇa.

31. Sage Nārada saw a great forest called Vṛndāvana at the foot of that mountain, O Sāvarṇi.

32. It was the playground favourite with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. It was beautiful on account of the rows of wish-yielding trees and lakes with blooming lotuses.

33-37. It was beautified (lit. illuminated) with trees like mango, hog-plum, Kadamba, jujube trees, pomegranates, date-palms, betelnut trees, orange trees, coconut palms, sandal trees, rose-apples, citron trees, bread-fruit trees, walnut trees, plantain trees, Campaka trees, grape-vines, golden Ketakas. All these trees were bending down with the weight of fruits and flowers.

It was served by a gentle wind, wafting the cool and sweet fragrance of (flowers of) Mallikā, Mādhavī, Kunda, cloves, and jasmine. All around, it was wet with spring-water issuing from Śataśṛṅga. It was richly endowed with the beauty of the spring season. It was endowed with innumerable bowers, beautified with rows of lamps studded with gems and provided with materials suitable for amorous sports.

38. O sage, it was resonant with the sound of glorifications (or repetitions of the name) of Kṛṣṇa by cowherds and cowherdesses, with the lowing of cows and calves, the warbling of birds and jingling sound of various ornaments and the sound of the churning of curds.

39. It had thirty-two other forests, extremely beautiful with various kinds of trees, bending down with (the weight of) fully blossomed flowers and fruits, attracting the minds of spectators.

40-43. He was greatly delighted to see it. He arrived at the resplendent city (capital) of Goloka. It was a circular citadel (full) of jewels. It was beautified with royal roads. It appeared splendid with crores of mansions of devotees of Kṛṣṇa, with chariots studded with excellent jewels and decorated with a number of small tinkling bells. It was beautiful on account of crores of wonderful mansions, full of treasures of excellent precious stones, adorned with pillars of precious stones—all arranged in rows.

It appeared splendid with beautiful halls of sports. It was built with excellent precious stones* and was furnished with gem-set altars or quadrangles (lighted with) rows of lamps studded with excellent gems.

44. Its courtyard was sprinkled with liquid (mixed) with filaments of flowers, agallochum, musk and saffron and with heaps of (vessels containing) curds, Dūrvā grass, fried grains and plantain trees.

45. Auspiciousness was caused by gold pitchers full of water and arches constructed. In it a considerable number of elephants and horses

* *ratna-sāra-vinirmitaḥ* is probably a misprint for... *vinirmitam.*

were treading the royal roads paved with precious stones.

46. It was crowded with a number of lords of cosmoses who had come to have a sight of Śrīkṛṣṇa and with great gods such as Brahmā and Śaṁkara having articles of worship in their hands.

47. It was full of multitudes of cowherds and cowherdesses who were going to have a look of Kṛṣṇa. The sage was delighted to see that great road so crowded (with these).

48. Then, he reached the mansion of Kṛṣṇa which was beautiful and appeared marvellous to all. It was surrounded by rows of mansions of cowherds including Nanda and of Vṛṣabhānu and others.

49. It was provided with four gates and consisted of sixteen citadels with moats around them. Each gate of it was guarded by a crore of cowherds as gatekeepers surrounding it.

50. At the doors with jewelled pillars and panels in front of him, he saw successively the doorkeepers who were sitting there (on duty).

51-53. (They were) Vīrabhānu, Candrabhānu, Sūryabhānu the third (doorkeeper), Vasubhānu, Devabhānu and then Śakrabhānu after him; Ratnabhānu, Supārśva, Viśāla, and then Vṛṣabha, Aṁśu, Bala, Subala, Devaprastha, Varūthapa, and Śrīdāman. He bowed to him (Śrīdāman) and entered with his permission. In the great wide quadrangle (before him) he saw a great mass of splendour.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Manifestation of Vāsudeva

Skanda said:

1. O sage, he saw a more brilliant, heavenly splendour, similar to crores of crores of suns arisen (and shining) simultaneously.

2. It completely pervaded all the quarters, intermediate cardinal points, above and below. It is said to be imperishable Brahman, characterised by existence, knowledge and bliss.

3. It permeated both Prakṛti and Puruṣa and their evolutes. It was that brilliance which persons accomplished in Yoga, crossing (in ascendance) all the six Cakras (plexuses) within (their body), see in their heads (in the *Sahasrāra-Kamala*) with the grace of Vāsudeva.

4. It is by his brilliance that the sun, the moon, fire and stars are

illuminated. They irradiate the whole world by their imperishable light.

5. Sātvatas called it Brahma-pura, the residence of the Lord, near which and around which crores of worshippers are standing.

6-7. Multitudes of Brahmās and Śaṅkaras with (materials of) worship in their hands, fall over it due to confusion. Cowherds and cowherdesses on whom there is the grace of Kṛṣṇa, see (the Lord) in that brilliance. Others see only the bright splendour but not him, O sage.

8. He (Nārada) saw therein a wonderful, lustrous, celestial, beautiful palace, consisting of excellent precious stones of various kinds, with thousands of pillars shining with jewels, beautiful with a big assembly hall.

9. It was illuminated all round with numerous rows of brilliant mansions of his devotees, both men and women, who were adorned with ornaments studded with jewels and with very fine garments of various kinds.

10. The sage, with ecstatic delight, saw there a brilliant throne, created out of the quintessence of excellent precious stones, which caused wonder in the minds of spectators.

11-12. There he saw seated (on the throne) Lord Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, the attributeless (Brahman), the omniscient ruler (of the universe), the excellent (supreme) Puruṣa whom Sātvatas (i.e. devotees of Kṛṣṇa) call Vāsudeva. Him some devotees call the 'Supreme Soul', some call 'Supreme Brahman', others, 'Brahman greater than the greatest', some, 'Lord Viṣṇu' while others call the 'Supreme Lord'.

13. (He saw) him, whose body was beautiful like a thousand gods of love (combined), who was always youthful (lit. a boy below 15 years of age), who, a receptacle of mercy, was graceful due to his extremely quiescent form, was superior to all the perishables and imperishables and (forever) independent.

14. (He saw him) whose side-glance causes the sport (as it were) of creation, sustenance and destruction of a number of Brahmāṇḍas (Cosmoses), who is the supreme ruler of innumerable crores of Brahmāṇḍas, who is the sole (deity) worthy of being saluted by all, who has assumed the garb of a great actor.

15. (He saw him) who was wearing excellent, yellow, priceless, resplendent garment, who appeared rich with ornaments of innumerable excellent jewels, whose complexion was (dark) like a newly formed cloud, and in whose ears excellent ear-rings of the shape of crocodile were shining.

16. (He) is called white in complexion as he was enveloped in a

highly brilliant mass of refulgence that was radiated from his person. His excellent crown was radiant with the wealth of excellent jewels. His eyes were charming like the petals of an autumnal lotus.

17. His person was besmeared with excellent fragrant sandal (paste). One (panel-like) side of his chest was marked with Śrīvatsa. He was sweetly playing on a flute put to his mouth with his lotus-like beautiful arms.

18. He was being worshipped by Rādhā, with multitudes of her friends, of whom Jayā, Suśīlā, Lalitā were prominent, and by Ramā and his consorts including Satyabhāmā, Kālindī (Yamunā) and Jāmbavatī.

19. He was being served by Dharma, Vedas, all the Suns and by Knowledge and others with their pairs of hands restrained (i.e. folded with reverence), and by his many weapons like Sudarśana who had assumed a personal form.

20. He was waited upon by his prominent attendants who were like emerald, ruby and gold in complexion, and some of whom were white (in colour), and whose arms were shining with the discus, mace, lotus and conch held (by them), and of whom Nanda and Sunanda were prominent.

21. He was being worshipped by many two-handed persons in the garb of cowherds, of whom Śrīdāmā was the chief. They bent down (to bow) with devotion. He was adored by Garuḍa, and by eight supernatural powers who bowed down to him.

22. Assuming personal forms, he was served by Quiescence, Mercy, Magnificence (Nourishment?), Contentment, Intelligence, Faith, Action, Prosperity, and by Friendliness, Forbearance, Memory and Intellect as well.

23. On seeing that marvellous, refulgent form, all his sense-organs were captivated by the pleasing fragrance of his form. His sight was obstructed due to the tears of joy; his hair stood on end out of love for him and he was filled with pleasure.

24. Overwhelmed with love, Nārada prostrated himself like a staff before him; with his hands folded in reverence, he stood before him, looking at his face.

25. Hari honoured him who was devoted to him exclusively, and whom he desired to see, by respectfully welcoming him (lit. by enquiring about his happy arrival).

26. The sage who came to himself by the taste of the nectar (in the form) of the Lord's speech, and who was extremely delighted by his sight, praised him devoutly.

Nārada said:

27. Be victorious, O Śrīkṛṣṇa, Lord Nārāyaṇa, the master of the world, Vāsudeva, who abide in all,[1] and are always dear to your exclusive devotees.

28. Your very wonderful feet are worthy of being worshipped by Rādhikā and Kamalā. You are the highest beatitude, and the supreme resort to those who aspire to it.

29. You are the eternal (element) of eternal souls; the soul, the sentience of sentient beings; beyond the perishables and imperishables. You are the Supreme Brahman, O Hari.

30. The extreme purity and supernatural power as is obtained by highest devotion to you, is not achieved by men with other means including penance.

31. Only the divine moonlight of your feet is capable of immediately destroying the thick darkness that abides in the hearts of people desirous of final liberation, O noble master.

32. O venerable Lord, the cause of all causes, you are proclaimed as the only one who should be worshipped, propitiated and realized by the Vedas.

33. The auspicious, blissful, bright refulgence that abides in each and every pore (of your skin), is more brilliant than the light of a crore of moons.

34. (You) the supreme attributeless person, always dwell in this imperishable, attributeless, residence called Amṛta, which is a mass of lustre.

35. By the power of your propitiation your devotees become free from Kāla who strikes terror into the universe, and from the great fear of Māyā.

36. For a resort I have approached you who are the master of the universe, and the soul abiding in all, the all-pervading Brahman, the great imperishable Puruṣa.

37. O Lord of Devas, it behoves you to confer that favour whereby my devotion unto your lotus-feet will always be firm.

Skanda said:

38. The Supreme God who was thus devoutly praised by the celestial sage (Nārada), spoke in nectarine words, delighting the sage.

1. This derivation from √*Vas* 'to dwell' is accepted by Purānas like *Viṣṇu* and *Brahma-vaivarta*

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Incarnations of Vāsudeva

The Lord said:

1. My audience (vision) that you got, O great sage, is due to your being an ever-exclusive devotee of mine, absence of hypocrisy (in you), and my will (to grant you the audience).

2. In you there is always (observance of) both non-violence and celibacy, abidance by personal (religious) duties, quiescence, disaffection to worldly (objects of) enjoyment, and perception and knowledge of the soul.

3. (You always have) association with saintly persons, (practice of) Yoga with all its eight parts, absolute sense-control, subsistence on food (prescribed) for sages, penance and freedom from all vices.

4. Absolute devotion exclusively to me, preceded by the knowledge of my greatness, is in you. Hence you (can) see me here, O firm observer of religious vows.

5. If there be ever other men who are endowed with these characteristics, they also (can) see me in such a form—me who am dear to devotees exclusively attached to me, O Brāhmaṇa.

6. O Brāhmaṇa, I, who am such (as described above) accompanied by Rādhā and Lakṣmī always stay in this imperishable residence along with my dependents.

7. I, who am of the form of Vāsudeva, am the giver of the fruits of all actions. By my immanence in all embodied beings, I always act as an independent one.

8. In the great abode called Vaikuṇṭha, I, a four-armed one, live with (my consort) Lakṣmī and along with my attendants of whom Nanda and Garuḍa are the chief ones.

9. On the earth, in the divine refulgent residence, Śveta-Dvīpa, I grant my audience five times a day, to the *Śveta-muktas* (i.e. liberated souls of that *Dvīpa*).

10. With my personal forms called Aniruddha, Pradyumna and Saṅkarṣaṇa I carry out the creation, sustenance and destruction of innumerable crores of Brahmāṇḍas (Cosmoses).[1]

11. At the beginning of creation Brahmā was created by me from

1. These are the functions of the three Vyūhas.

the lotus in my navel. He propitiated me with penance and sacrifices, O Nārada.

12-20. Then being pleased with him, I granted the boons desired by him: (saying) "O Brahman, you will get the necessary (competence) for creation of subjects. By virtue of my boon all of them will abide by your command. The eternal Vedas will manifest themselves in your intelligence. You will have a correct knowledge of my own form. None shall cross the bounds of morality and propriety laid down by you. You alone will be the bestower of boons to multitudes of Suras and Asuras and noble-souled sages, who are desirous of obtaining boons, O Brahman. O Vidhi (Brahman), when, in a task which cannot be accomplished, you get embarrassed or deluded, I shall manifest myself as soon as I am remembered by you, and accomplish that task for you. While the universe is being created by you, I shall assume the form of a boar[1] and bring the earth which is submerged and lost in the great ocean, and establish it in its own place after killing the Daitya Hiraṇyākṣa proud of his strength. When your day ends, I shall become a fish and shall support (floating) like a boat, the earth along with its medicinal plants, Manus and others, during the period of your night. When the sons of Kaśyapa (i.e. Devas and Asuras) will churn the ocean for (obtaining) nectar, I, assuming the form of a tortoise, will bear on my back Mount Mandara used as the churning rod. Assuming the form of a Man-Lion, I shall kill Hiraṇyakaśipu, the son of Diti, the destroyer of sacrifices, for accomplishing the task of Suras, O Vidhi.

21-23. There will be (born) Bali, the son of Virocana, a powerful great Asura. He will dislodge Śakra from his kingdom. When the three worlds are taken away (i.e. conquered) by him, and the husband of Śacī (Indra) is disappointed and downcast, I shall be the twelfth son of Aditi from Kaśyapa. Then, I shall give again the kingdom of heaven to Devendra. I shall re-establish the deities in their respective places, O Brahmā. And I shall make Bali an inhabitant of the nethermost subterranean world.

24. Becoming (a son) named Kapila from Kardama and Devahūtī, I, endowed with indifference to the world, shall proclaim the Sāṅkhya philosophy that was lost (forgotten) during the course of time.

1. The order of incarnations as given in the text is as follows: (1) Divine Boar, (2) Fish, (3) Tortoise, (4) Man-Lion, (5) Vāmana, (6) Kapila, (7) Datta, (6) Vṛṣabha, (7) Bhārgava Rāma, (8) Dāśarathi Rāma, (9) Kṛṣṇa, (10) Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana (Vyāsa), (11) Buddha, (12) Kalki.

25. Becoming (incarnating as) Datta, the son of Anasūyā and Atri, I shall teach the science called Ānvīkṣikī (i.e. Nyāya) to Prahlāda and to Yadu (Sahasrārjuna?), O Vidhi.

26. Incarnating (with the name) Vṛṣabha, the son of Merudevī and Nābhi, I shall propagate the ancient Dharma called Pāramahaṁsya[1] (i.e. pertaining to Paramahaṁsas—the highest sect of recluses).

27. In Tretā, I shall become Rāma, a scion of Bhṛgu family. I shall annihilate Kṣatriyas who have transgressed the limits (of morality etc.) and have taken to bad ways.

28-31. When the period of junction between Tretā and Dvāpara (i.e. Tretā coming to an end and Dvāpara about to start) arrives, I shall become Rāma, son of Daśaratha and Kauśalyā. Lakṣmī, with the name Sītā, will be the daughter of Janaka. I shall marry her after breaking the big bow of Śiva. I shall then kill in battle along with his brothers the terrible king of Rākṣasas (Rāvaṇa), enemy of Devas and sages and abductor of Sītā. Then great sages including Vālmīki will sing variously of his (that is my) exploits, on hearing which there will be destruction of sins.

32-33. When the junction of Dvāpara and Kali comes to a close, for the sake of annihilation of Asuras who become burden to the earth, and for protecting righteous people, I, Kṛṣṇa, called Vāsudeva, will be born of Vasudeva and Devakī in the city of Mathurā. Similarly Saṅkarṣaṇa alias Balarāma, Pradyumna and Aniruddha (i.e. all the Vyūhas of the Pāñcarātras) will be born in the family of Yadu.

34. Rādhā will be the daughter of the cowherd Vṛṣabhānu and I shall sport with her in Vṛndāvana, O Lotus-born One (Brahmā).

35. Lakṣmī will be born as the daughter of Bhīṣmaka by name Rukmiṇī. After defeating kings in a battle, I shall marry her.

36. After killing Asuras, the enemies of Dharma and of kings who were haunted by them, and by establishing Dharma, I shall make the earth free from burden.

37. If the mind of a person is in any way devoted to me, I shall take him to the supreme position of Brahman.

38. After establishing righteousness on the earth, and bringing about the annihilation of Yadu's race, I shall then vānish from the

1. This Purāṇa has a soft corner for Jainism. He equates Jaina ascetics with the Brāhmaṇical Paramahaṁsas, the highest order of Sannyāsa.

earth[1], while Devas look on.

39. Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana and others will extol variously the heroic exploits of me as Kṛṣṇa. They will be instant destroyers of sins.

40. After incarnating as Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana, the son of Parāśara, I shall divide the Veda into different branches like a tree.

41. By becoming Buddha, I shall delude by the use of fallacious reasoning and deceit the Asuras[2] who adopting Vedic practices will harass the three worlds.

42-43. When the Asuras killed by me (as) Kṛṣṇa and by Arjuna in the battles, will promote and establish Adharma (unrighteous practices) on the earth, I, sage Nārāyaṇa, shall be born on the earth from my devotee Dharmadeva in the land of Kośala, as a Brāhmaṇa-singer of Sāman hymns.

44. O Aja (Brahmā), establishing the holy Dharma I shall be the protector of sages who will be born as men by the curse of Munis (other sages) as well as Uddhava, O child.

45. At the end of Kali I shall incarnate as Kalki. Riding a divine horse, I shall kill highly sinful people of Mlecchа origin.

46. Whenever the Dharma promulgated in the Vedas is being destroyed by Asuras, at that time my manifestation shall take place for its protection.[3]

47. Therefore, completely giving up anxiety, create subjects as before."

After conferring these boons upon him I became invisible.

48. I did, do, shall do easily by means of my powers what all the boons given to him imply.

49-50. O Brāhmaṇa, the vision of mine, who am the controller of all embodied beings in this way, has become very difficult to obtain. (It was possible for you) due to your single-minded devotion unto me.

O excellent sage, seek any boon desired by you from me. I am highly pleased with you. My audience shall not be fruitless.

Skanda said:

51. On hearing the speech of the Lord, the excellent sage Nārada,

1. Mbh, BhP testify to Kṛṣṇa's death and the cremation of his physical body. By the time of this Purāṇa, Kṛṣna is too great to die as a human being. He 'vanishes' from this world.

2. The author's prejudice against Buddhism is probably due to its challenging position to Brāhmaṇism at the time of this Purāṇa.

3. Cf. BG IV.7

regarded himself as blessed, and addressed the Lord, O sage.

(Nārada said:)

52. O Master, by your very vision all my desire is fulfilled. I regard this (i.e. your audience) as extremely difficult to get for all embodied beings.

53. Hence nothing except directly seeing you, your devotee and this your residence (called) Amṛta, is desired by me as worth obtaining.

54. Compared with this, there is nothing else anywhere in this Brahmāṇḍa that is difficult to be obtained, and this I can request of you who are pleased with me here.

55. The happiness in the other world, which is obtained by performance of Vedic rituals pertaining to Devas and ancestors, is also perishable.

56. I do not wish that insignificant happiness to be greater than you, O Lord. I beg only one boon desired by me from you who are the most prominent among bestowers of boons.

57. May my intellect be always eager for singing the excellences of you, as well as that of your devotees, and may it have ever-increasing love and devotion unto you.

Skanda said:

58. Promising him 'so be it' to what was requested by him, Kṛṣṇa gave him a great lute useful in singing and spoke to him again.

The Lord said:

59. O divine sage, go from this place to Viśālā Badarī (i.e. Badarikāśrama). There propitiate devoutly me, Nārāyaṇa, the son of Dharma.

60. You are a devotee exclusively attached to me. Your heart is free from deceit. Hence I esteem you better that God Brahmā, your father.

61. O sage, devotees exclusively attached to me, know everything about me, of my nature and form, and the extent of my greatness.

62. In their hearts I am the only object of thought and contemplation, and they are so in mine. Their desired object is no other than I, and I too have none other but they.

63. Just as devoted, chaste wives bring good husbands under their power by their virtuous qualities, in the same way my devotees bring me under their power.

64. I follow them along with Śrī, as if I am subservient to them. Wherever they are, I am present there.

65. O divine sage, know the truth that to those who desire liberation, I can be attained in this world only through association with saintly persons, and by no other means.

66. Whenever men resort to me, they are immediately liberated from bondage to Māyā and the state of being a Jīva (i.e. a soul subject to Saṁsāra).

67. With whatever feeling or inclination of mind a man seeks refuge in me, he gets the happiness as desired by him, but he does not revert to Saṁsāra, as in the case of others.

Skanda said:

68. Thus addressed by the Lord, Nārada who had obtained the desired favour, bowed down to him and returned with his eyes full of tears.

69. While singing with the lute, he saw the Śveta-Mukta (the liberated soul from Śveta-Dvīpa, his guide) going in front of him as before, and he (Nārada) followed him, O eminent Brāhmaṇa.

70. Immediately after arriving at Śveta-dvīpa, he bowed down to them (all) and returned. Then Nārada arrived quickly at Meru.

71. From Meru he proceeded to Mount Gandhamādana. From the sky he quickly alighted at Viśālā Badarī (Badarikāśrama).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Nārada Meets Nara and Nārāyaṇa

Skanda said:

1-4. Then he saw the two divine, ancient, excellent sages performing a great penance. They were established in their Ātmans and were great performers of religious observances. By their refulgence they superseded the Sun who illuminates all the world. They were characterised by Śrīvatsa and were worthy of worship. They had circular mass of

matted hair. Their arms (palms?) were characterised by lotus. They had discus-sign on (the soles of) their feet. Their chests were broad (and well developed). They had long arms and wore white, fine, compact silken garment. They had excellent faces with high foreheads, excellent eyelashes and beautiful nose. They were endowed with auspicious characteristics, divine form with excessively brilliant lustre.

5. Approaching them with humility, he circumambulated them. He devoutly prostrated himself before them (touching the ground). He stood before them with palms folded in reverence.

6-7. Then, both of the sages, the abodes of penance, glory and lustre, broke their silence at the end of the rituals perfomed in the first part of the day. They worshipped (received) Nārada by offering Pādya and Arghya in a quiet manner. They sat on their seats and Nārada on one of Kuśa grass.

8. When they were seated there, the place shone like an enclosure of sacrifice illuminated by fires having huge flames after receiving oblation of ghee.

9. Then Nārāyaṇa addressed Nārada who had taken rest, was received with hospitality and respect and was seated comfortably there.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

10. O Brāhmaṇa, was eternal Lord, the Supreme Soul, the great cause (source) of both of us seen by you in the Brahmadhāma (residence of Brahman)?

Nārada said:

11. Venerable Sir! It is through your favour that I saw the Supreme Lord Vāsudeva staying in his imperishable residence.

12. Being sent by him to serve you both, I have come here only. I shall always stay with you remaining exclusively devoted to him.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

13. You are blessed; you are favoured (by God) that the Lord Himself was seen by you. Neither a Deva not a sage has ever seen him, O Brāhmaṇa.

14. Those devotees only who by exclusive devotion unto him have attained imperishable equality with him, (can) see him who is the cause of everything.

15. That the Supreme Person, the Lord of divine form, is very difficult to be seen, is the purport of a true statement of mine, O Nārada.

16. None other than his devotee is more dear to him in this world. Hence he manifested himself to you, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

17. His person is enveloped by a mass of lustre. His mysterious form transcends Guṇas. Complete bliss constitutes his form. He is forever pure and imperishable.

18. He does not have a form, complexion, age of the ordinary type (or derived from Prakṛti). Whatever he has is divine including his weapons. He alone is the highest resort of devotees exclusively attached to him.

19. Devotion to Vāsudeva is performed by persons who have realized the one-ness of Ātman and Brahman and who have desisted from Guṇas. He is endowed with such qualities.

20. Who is capable of describing the greatness of this Supreme Soul, who is the master of incomprehensible, infinite powers, O great sage?

21-22. He is the Soul of souls, imperishable Soul, unsoiled and pure like the firmament, visible only to persons endowed with divine vision, who is pure existence, the Puruṣa born of Vasudeva. He is endowed with all auspicious qualities, attributeless, the master of all rulers. He, the knower of Brahman, the master is knowable through superior knowledge. He should be propitiated.

23. He who pleases that Lord of divine form with penance solely devoted to him, and pious devotion, is the most blessed.

24. Therefore, O divine sage, you also propitiate him with exclusive pious devotion, and perform penance here for some time, O dear one.

25. With your soul extremely purified with penance, you will (be in a position to) know truly all the glory of the Lord, the great soul, as will be described by me.

26. Know that penance is the means of attaining all objectives (and) his heart, O sage. The Lord is not won over by a person who has not performed extreme penance.

Skanda said:

27. Addressed thus by revered Nara-Nārāyaṇa, he (Nārada) was pleased. Being desirous of performing penance, the highly intelligent one spoke.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Duties of the Four Varṇas

Nārada said:

1. O Lord! Expound to me the Ekānta Dharma as approved by you, whereby the Universal Soul, Vāsudeva, gets always pleased.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa replied:

2. O Brāhmaṇa, you have asked very well. Certainly your intellect is pure. I shall tell even a secret to you, a devotee who are attached to me.

3. At the beginning of the Kalpa this Dharma was proclaimed by me to Vivasvān. I shall communicate that very ancient Dharma to you, O sage.

4. That is verily the Ekāntika Dharma which is undivided devotion exclusively to the Lord as it is to Lakṣmī and is accompanied by the knowledge of one's own Dharma and disaffection to objects of worldly enjoyment.

5. Thereby the ruler of Goloka himself becomes extremely pleased, and even the devotee has all his wishes fully accomplished.

Nārada asked:

6. I have a desire to know separately the characteristics of *Svadharma* (personal duties) from you who are the source of Śāstras. It behoves you to relate them to me.

7. You alone are the root (source of origin) of all Vedas, Āgamas and Śāstras including the eternal Dharma, O good Lord.

8. You alone are the Lord Vāsudeva incarnate, who is beyond the perishable (objects). You, a store of mercy, stay here for the welfare of all beings.

9. God Brahmā and others who are other than you, are controlled by their respective natural Guṇas. They do not know Dharma and other (related things) as they truly are. Hence narrate it (to me).

Skanda said:

10. Lord Nārāyaṇa, the omniscient son of Dharma, who was thus

asked by the Divine sages (Nārada), narrated to him in due order, the personal Dharma etc.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

11. The moral conduct is different for (different) *Varṇas* (castes) and stages of life. That is called *Svadharma* and is general as well as special.

12. At first listen to the Dharma (duty) common to all men.[1] Non-injury (Ahiṁsā) is proclaimed to be the first supreme duty.

13. (*Obscure*) Among one's main moral inclinations what is called absence of ill will even of the mental type, in a provocative situation, towards any living being, is known as Ahiṁsā or non-injury.

14. Truth is that speech whereby no injury is caused to living beings. Penance is characterised by the diminution (reduction in) of the enjoyment (of objects) permitted by the scriptures.

15. Purification is of two types, external and internal. Non-taking of what belongs to others either in his absence or by deceit (is non-stealth).

16-21. Proper celibacy; restraint of the passions or desires, greed and anger; gladly donating wealth to a suitable person; satisfaction with what one gets through luck; total renunciation of injury at holy places or in sacrifices and other religious acts or for obtaining the four ends of human life either for one's self or for others; avoidance of acts which cause fall from one's caste; restraint of (movement of) hands and feet, stomach (i.e. eating), the organ of generation (sex) and speech; avoidance of wine and meat and all vices; abstaining from adultery; observance of the traditional good practices of one's family; observance of fast along with the (prescribed ten restraints) on the eleventh day of the dark and bright half of the month; proper observance of the specific *Vrata* of the birthday of Hari; straightforwardness; service of saints; taking food after its distribution (as per prescribed rules); acts of devotion unto the Lord—These are duties common to all men.[2]

1. Cf. *ahiṁsā satyam asteyaṁ śaucam*
indriyanigrahaḥ /
evaṁ sāmāsikaṁ dharmaṁ
cāturvarṇye bravīn manuḥ //
(*Manu* X.63)

2. There is a close similarity in the items included in Sādhāraṇa Dharmas (duties common to all men) in ancient texts like *Viṣṇu Dharma Sūtra*, II.16-17; *Āpastamba Dh.S.* I.8.23-6; Mbh, *Śānti* 60.7-8,297.24-25; *Brahma* P. 114.16-18. The speciality of our Pāñcarātra text is the inclusion of the Ekādaśī Vrata and observance of the birthday of Hari (e.g Gokula Aṣṭamī).

22. Brāhamaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras—These are spoken as the four *Varṇas* (Castes). I shall now narrate the specific duties of each to you, O sage.

23. The natural duties of a Brāhmaṇa are quiescence,[1] selfcontrol, forgiveness, purity, faith in Vedas, devotion to the Lord, penance, knowledge of Brahman and worldly knowledge.

24. The following are declared as the duties of Kṣatriyas: Bravery (i.e. performance of acts of bravery); courage; generosity; strength; dignity; fitness to be a refuge; protection of cows, Brāhmaṇas and saints; performance of sacrifices.

25. The duties of a king are as follows: Protecting the subjects; establishing Dharma on the earth; and administering punishment to those who deserve it.

26. The duties of a Vaiśya are: faith in the Vedas; doing acts of charity; rendering service to saintly persons and Brāhmaṇas; non-satisfaction in acquisition of wealth; and assiduous efforts.

27. O excellent sages, the specific duty of a Śūdra as proclaimed is: faithful (without any fraud or deceit) service of twice-born castes, Devas and cows.

28. The means of livelihood prescribed for a Brāhmaṇa are: teaching, performance of sacrifices, acceptance of a gift from a pure person. Out of these, the last is laid down in case of adversity.

29-30. Four types of other means of livelihood are prescribed for an excellent Brāhmaṇa who finds fault with performance of sacrifice and teaching (as means of livehood). (They are) gleaning ears of corn, constant mendicancy, settled householdership and proper agriculture. It should be noted by excellent Brāhmaṇas that herein the preceding one (i.e. mode of livelihood) is more conducive to welfare than the succeeding one.

31. In case of an emergency[2] a Brāmaṇa should maintain himself by adopting the mode of livelihood of a Vaiśya or that of a Kṣatriya but never the mode of a dog (Cāṇḍāla?).

32. A Kṣatriya should earn his living by weapons (military profession) while protecting Dharma. In emergency he should follow the means of livelihood of a Vaiśya or should move about in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa.

33. The means of living for a king is declared to be collection of

1. VV 23-27; cf. BG XVIII. 42-44.
2. For *Āpad Dharmas* (i.e. duties in emergency) cf HD II.1, pp. 118-30.

taxes, except from Brāhmaṇas, and from other sources, after keeping contented all the subjects according to the exigencies of time and place.

34. Even in emergency, the service of a low person is totally prohibited to Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇas, as that reduces one's lustre.

35. In the case of a Vaiśya the mode of livelihood is spoken (as consisting of) agriculture, trade and commerce and tending of cows and lending money on interest as the fourth, but in emergency he may follow the Śūdra mode of livelihood.

36. A Śudra should maintain himself on the money earned by service rendered to twice-born castes. In emergency he should follow the mode of livelihood of artisans etc.

37. When all of them become free after averting the emergency, they should perform the expiation proper for them and again take up their respective main vocations as means of livelihood.

38. (Persons belonging to) the four castes should associate themselves with saintly people and never with bad people. Association with the good leads to liberation, while company with evil persons leads to hell.

39. Those who, having subdued erotic passion, anger, taste for flavours, pride, jealousy, hypocrisy, are the devotees of Viṣṇu, are regarded as saintly persons.

40. Those who are addicted to sexual pleasure in the company of women, greedy after wealth, murderous, self-conceited through hyprocrisy and who pose to be devotees, are bad people.

41. Having ascertained that by nature Asura type of prosperity is (found) among bad people and the Deva type of affluence is (seen) among the good, good and saintly persons should be resorted to and served by those desirous of happiness.

42. The intellect (of a person) assumes a shape in accordance with the kind of Śāstras (scriptures) and people he associates with. Hence no association should be had with bad people (and heretic scriptures).

43. To persons who like to render service to saintly persons, any type of superior affluence or excellent power or divine faculties are not unobtainable through dint of their power.

44. Men who, though established in their Dharma, bear malice to saintly persons, shall never attain a happy state or beatitude anywhere by performing any act.

45. If devotees of Viṣṇu who are devoted to the great worship (of the god) bear hatred towards saintly persons, he (Viṣṇu) will never be

propitious unto them.

46. In whatever species the haters of saintly people are born after death, they will be harassed with hunger and disease throughout their life (up to death).

47. Merely by doing disrespect to good (saintly) people, there is an instantaneous annihilation even of a mass of merit, (span of) life and wealth of all people.

48. Therefore, service should be rendered to saintly persons by all those who desire happiness. Sacred places should be resorted to. Brāhmaṇas and cows should be worshipped.

49. Those evil-minded people who denigrate holy places and idols of gods, are bastards and will certainly have exinction of their family line.

50. If one Brāhmaṇa is satisfied by receiving excellent meal, Dakṣiṇā and other things, the whole world is satisfied. Hari himself is pleased with him.

51. If one Brāhmaṇa is harmed (it is as good as) the whole world is hurt. Therefore, Brāhmaṇas who are (this-worldly) forms of Viṣṇu shall be worshipped and honoured according to one's capacity.[1]

52. Even all multitudes of Devas abide in the limbs (body) of cows. All holy places exist in them.

53. When one cow is worshipped, all Devas get worshipped and all sacred places get visited, O Nārada.

54. If out of mistake or negligence, hurt or injury is caused to one cow anywhere, all the deities are hurt and holy places are damaged.

55. Therefore, people born in the four Varṇas should behave as per injunctions and should abstain from what is prohibited.

56. Those who are beyond the pale of four Varṇas, their conduct conforming to their family requirements will be conducive to their welfare if it is devoid of unrighteousness like stealing, violence etc.

57. Thus the duties of Varṇas have been briefly proclaimed by me, O sage. Now, I shall tell you the duties of the four stages of life (*Āśramas*).

1. This deification of Brāhmaṇas is found in Vedic times also, e.g. *ete vai devāḥ pratyakṣaṁ yad brāhmaṇāḥ* (*Taittirīya Saṁhitā* I.7.3.1). Also cf. *Śatapatha* XII.4.46; *Tait. Āraṇyaka* II.15.

CHAPTER TWENTYONE

Duties of Celibates (Students)

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

1. Brahmacārī (celibate student), Gṛhastha (householder), Vānaprastha (forest-hermit) and Yati (ascetic)—these four belong to the four periods of religious life.

2. He who is born of a pure family, is consecrated by sacred rites, and thus has attained the status of a twice-born is called a Brahmacārī (a celibate student). I shall narrate his duties from the beginning.

3. Residing in the house of a preceptor, a religious student should study the Vedas.[1] He should be pure, have subdued his senses, have control over his anger, be disciplined and be a speaker of truth.

4. He should perform fire-worship in the morning and in the evening. Remaining self-controlled, he should go out to beg alms. He should perform the Sandhyā prayer thrice a day and worship God Viṣṇu everyday.

5. Remaining calm and collected, he should partake of a limited quantity of food with the permission of the preceptor. He should always be solely devoted to the service of the preceptor and be free from evil habits.

6. He should observe silence at the time of bath, taking meals, performing fire-worship and muttering prayers. He should not pare the nails or cut his hair and should not over-cleanse his teeth.

7. He should not over-cleanse his garments and should be sincere to his preceptor. When called, he should study (learn) and should bow down at the beginning of and after the completion of the lesson.

8. He should not touch the untouchable, nor speak with persons undeserved for verbal exchange. He should not eat prohibited articles of food, and never drink forbidden drinks.

9. He should wear and possess a waistband, a deer-skin, a staff, a *Kumaṇḍalu* (pot of gourd as a water-bottle), two white cloths, the sacred thread and a rosary of beads (for muttering *mantras*).[2]

10. He should have Darbha grass in his hands and should have

1. The practice of residence with the teacher away from home was current even in the Brāhmaṇa period (vide the story of Nabhānedīṣṭha in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 22 9; also cf *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* XI.5.4.1-17).

2. For principal duties of a celibate see HD II.i, pp. 305 ff.

matted hair without combing and other embellishments. He should abstain from application of perfumed unguents to the body, garland of flowers and ornaments.

11. He should not smear his body with oil, and should not use a cosmetic ointment like collyrium. He should assiduously avoid contact with, (abstain) from, liquor and meat.

12. A celibate should totally abstain from eying, touchinig, speaking, playing with women and combing (the hair) of a woman.

13. With the exception of idols of gods, an intelligent student should never touch even a woman-figure of wood or a woman's picture etc. Nor should he look at them intently.

14. He should never see the sexual intercourse of animals. He should not listen to, nor should speak of, the good or bad qualities of women.

15. Without touching (the person of) one's own preceptor's wife, he should pay obeisance. Even with one's mother, he should not sit in a secret or solitary place.

16. Behaving thus, he should stay there (in preceptor's house) till the completion of education. Then, if free from worldly attachment, the celibate student should be either a recluse (*Sannyāsin*) or *Naiṣṭhika* i.e. a perpetual religious student who continues with his preceptor, vowing life-long abstinence and chastity. But it is proclaimed that in the Kali Age, eligibility for adopting the vow of a *Naiṣṭhika* is prohibited.

17. By the term Kali one should understand 'not in the junction of Kali-age'. He should be either a forest-hermit or, if he is not averse to worldly life, he should be a householder.

18. Celibacy (*Brahmacarya*) is of four types: *Prājāpatya*, *Sāvitra*, *Brāhma* and *Naiṣṭhika*. One should adopt any of these according to one's capacity.

CHAPTER TWENTYTWO

Duties of Householders

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

1. One who desires to become a householder should (first) pay his tuition-fees according to his capacity. After paying the fees, and with his (preceptor's) permission, he should perform the *Samāvartana*

ceremony (for pupil's homecoming after finishing the course of holy study).

2. He should then marry with due formalities, a girl suitable to his family, junior to him in age, healthy, devoid of masculine characteristics (e.g. hair on the upper lip) and sinless.[1]

3. Then for the favour and delight of Lord Kṛṣṇa, he should, according to his eligibility and authority, perform daily worship (by performing the *Tarpaṇa* of Devas, Sages, Manes and living beings) as per injunctions.

4. Everyday he should perform (holy) bath, twilight prayers, muttering of Mantras, Fire-worship (Homa), recitation of Vedas, worship of Viṣṇu, *Tarpaṇa* (offering of libations of water to deceased parents etc.), *Vaiśvadeva* (offering to all deities by offering oblations to fire before meals), reception of guests.

5. With wealth earned by righteous means one should perform meritorious acts, according to one's capacity. He should be unattached. He should feed his dependents, and should not harass them.

6. With reference to a body or bodily limbs, one should not entertain enmity like a brute against others (i.e. one should not inflict injury on the body or limbs of others). One should give up the sense of 'I' and 'mine' with reference to one's body etc.

7. He should carefully form association with devotees of the Lord and saintly persons. He should not keep company of lewd, vicious people and greedy persons.

8. He should never look at the wives of others with sexual desire. He should not approach his wife (carnally) during Śrāddha, *Parvan* days and observance of religious vows.

9. Even though a man has attained maturity in Sāṅkhya (philosophy) and Yogic (practice), he gets infatuated even with his daughter in a lonely place.

10. Hence an intelligent person should not sit with his mother, sister or daughter in privacy. No need to say about sitting in such places with other young women (unrelated to him).

11. Of all inauspicious things, a widow is the most inauspicious one. Her sight or touch destroys the merits of men.

12. If at the time of starting on a journey one sees a widow in front, one should not go at that time. Otherwise death is certain.

1. Cf Rules for selecting a bride summarised in HD II.i, pp 431-433.

13. The blessings of widowed women are similar to the hissing of black serpents. A householder should be afraid of them as of ogresses.

14. One should avoid from a distance liquor, meat, intoxicants (narcotics), gambling etc. One should not entertain malice against living beings, even by speech anywhere.

15. Everyday one should listen to the stories and exploits of the incarnations of Hari. A believer should perform all acts for the sake of Vāsudeva.

16. One should undertake some self-imposed religious observances in the month of Kārttika, Māgha, Vaiśākha, the period of four months from Āṣāḍha to Kārttika and intercalated thirteenth month (called '*adhika*', extra, additional month).

17. A householder should make religious gifts according to his capacity, to a virtuous recipient in a sacred place, at an auspicious time, as per injunctions. He should be merciful to all beings.

18. O sinless one, I shall now mention to you sacred lands and places, auspicious times, meritorious worthy recipients which specially enhance the merit (of the act).

19. On this earth that land which is presided over by me is the best of all—the land where multitudes of great sages, great observers of religious vows, perform penance.

20-25. The sanctity of places is due to the greatness of Lord Hari and his devotees. They are as follows: Gaṅgādvāra, Mathurā, Naimiṣāraṇya, Kurukṣetra, Ayodhyā, Prayāga, Gayāśiras, (Jagannātha) purī, Varāṇasī, the sacred hermitage of Pulaha (Śālagrāma), the hermitage of Kapila (Siddhapur in Gujarat), Śrīraṅga, Prabhāsa, Kuśasthalī (Dvārakā), the holy Siddhapada, and the great lake Puṣkara, the Raivata mountain (Mount Girnār), the place of sports of the Lord along with Śrī, so also the Govardhana mountain and the sacred forest Vṛndāvana, seven *Kulaparvatas* (principal mountain ranges) including Mahendra, Malaya and others, sacred great rivers famous in Purāṇas like Bhāgīrathī, highly holy river Yamunā and Sarasvatī, Godāvarī, Sarayū, Kāverī, Gomatī and others and *Nadas* (great rivers like the Indus).

26. Wherever the worship of the idol of the Lord is performed with great celebrations, and wherever devotees exclusively attached to the Lord live (that place is sacred).

27. Where excellent Brāhmaṇas commit no violence (in sacrifices and Śrāddha) and are established in their (routine of) duties, where animals including deer move about without any fear (they are the holy places).

28. Wherever incarnations and stay of Hari have taken place, they are specially the most sacred places on the earth.

29a. Even if an insignificant religious act is performed at these places, it gives a thousand times more merit.

29b-32. I shall now narrate to you the times which enhance the merit (of the act done), Listen to it, O Nārada:

Two *Ayanas* (the period of Sun's transition from one solstice to another), *Viṣuva* (the first point of Aries or Libra into which the Sun enters at the vernal or autumnal equinox), the eclipse of the Sun and the Moon, the days without a *tithi*, *Vyatīpāta* and all constellations from Śravaṇa, all the twelfth and eleventh days (*Tithis*), the first days of Manvantaras and Yugas—All these are auspicious days. Also the new-moon day, *Vaidhṛti*, the full-moon days accompanied by the constellation of the month and four Aṣṭakā days,[1] the day with the constellation under which one is born and days of celebration of the birth of Hari (the eighth day in the dark half of Śrāvaṇa).

33. Those times are auspicious when there take place the sacred ceremonies and consecration of wife and children or times of getting prosperity and of finding a person worthy of receiving gifts.

34. Worship of Devas, manes, Brāhmaṇas and saintly persons according to one's capacity, sacred bath, religious gifts, muttering of Mantras, yield infinite fruits.

35. Just as water supplied to roots reaches all branches, so the Lord himself is the worthy recipient, giving satisfaction to all, O Nārada.

36. Those Brāhmaṇas are worthy of receiving (religious gifts) who are satisfied by non-violence and Vedic learning, who hold in their heart Viṣṇu with proper religious devotion.

37. Know that the devotees of the Lord who are exclusively attached to him and release those who are bound (in Saṁsāra), are worthy recipients and the Lord himself abides in them.

38. A rich person should get constructed massive temples of Viṣṇu. He should also provide means of subsistence for the unbroken continuity of the worship (of God).

39. He should prepare reservoirs of water and gardens for the sake of Viṣṇu. He should satisfy saints and Brāhmaṇas with rich food of good flavour.

40. He should according to his capacity perform Vaiṣṇava type of

1. The 8th day in the dark half of Mārgaśīrṣa (acc. to *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra* II.4.1) or of three months, viz. Pauṣa, Māgha and Phālguna is known as Aṣṭakā.

sacrifices involving no violence as per injunctions. He should celebrate the birth-anniversary festivals of Viṣṇu with greatly affluent preparations.

41. In the dark half of Bhādrapada, on *Kṣaya*-days, in holy places and on the *parvan* days, one should perform the *Śrāddha* of one's parents and of their relatives as per one's capacity.

42. In ritualistic acts pertaining to Devas and to the manes, one should worship the devotees of the Lord and Brāhmaṇas who are well-established in their specific religious duties and should feed them as if one was feeding the Lord.

43. In rituals pertaining to Devas two Brāmaṇas and in ritualistic acts about Pitṛs (e.g. Śrāddha) three Brāhmaṇas should be fed as per prescribed procedure, or one should feed only one (per Daiva and Pitṛ rituals), but one should not enlarge (the number of Brāhmaṇas) during Śrāddha.

44. It is definite that Śāstric injunctions do not demand enlargement of place, time, provisions, worthy recipients, utensils of worship etc.

45. A man should never serve non-vegetarian diet anywhere in a Śrāddha nor he should eat it.[1] The ancestors are highly pleased (by partaking) food suitable to sages and with milk and ghee.

46. All the ancestors who are extremely merciful are satisfied by non-injury to all beings through thoughts, words and physical acts.

47. Therefore, a man who is devoted to Vāsudeva should not serve meat in Śrāddha anywhere, either out of evil company or out of ignorance of the meaning of the scripture.

48. He should observe vows and perform rites pertaining to Viṣṇu, along with restraints including celibacy. He should be devoted to him (Viṣṇu) and should do no other work on that day.

49. One should shun auspicious rites during the defilement caused by child-birth or death of one's relatives as well as at the time of the solar and lunar eclipses, as prescribed in the scriptures.

50. In disputes and even in taking decision, in transaction of business, non-householders, including renouncers and widows are not to be employed.

51. Where such persons are present no work can be successful. It

1. Other old Purāṇas and Smṛtis prescribe the periods of time for which Pitṛs are gratified by flesh of certain animals (vide *Yājñavalkya* I.258-261). For other references vide HD IV, p 423. SkP being a late Purāṇa strongly disapproves of non-vegetarian food in Śrāddha.

will lead to destruction. This is the decision, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

52. These are the duties of householders narrated in brief by me. After performing these, people will enjoy imperishable happiness as desired by them.

53. Householders of twice-born castes are declared as fourfold according to the means of livelihood and known by those various names (of their ways of livelihood), such as maintaining themselves by picking up grains when corn is taken to the thrashing floor.

54. I shall now proclaim to you the duties of women abiding by which women will get their desired happiness, O excellent one among the virtuous ones.

55. By women whose husbands are alive, their own husband should always be served as a god, and is to be obeyed even if he be old, diseased or indigent.

56. His relatives also should be obeyed by serving them as is due to them Utensils in the house should be kept clean and bright.

57. Everyday the house should be kept clean by sweeping, sprinkling of water etc. What is true yet agreeable, should be spoken and they should always remain in a pure state.

58. Fickleness, overgreediness, anger, stealing, violence and association with the irreligious—all these should be avoided both by women as well as by men.

59. In religious rituals they should always be exclusively devoted to them. Giving up arrogance and subduing sense-organs, they should live with modesty.

60. Worship to the Lord of Ramā should be performed by those women who are established in the virtuous duty of exclusive devotion to the husband. They should never (try to) be independent and self-willed.

61. A widow should always serve Viṣṇu, regarding him to be her husband. She should never listen to, nor speak about, sexual matters.[1]

62. If there is no emergency, she should never touch a man unless he is a very close relative. She should never look at a man with carnal intention.

63. A widow does not get spoilt by the touch of her male child or of an old man, or by speaking with them in unavoidable situations.

1. For duties of widows cf HD II.i, pp.583-87. The extracts from Smṛtis and other works show that the position of Hindu widows was unenviable till recent times.

64. She should not enter into inordinate controversy in matters pertaining to practical life. In essential matters she may speak with them (in open places).

65. She should never intently see the sexual union even of animals. She should give up all objects of pleasure and should be moderate in taking meal once a day.

66. She should not put on fine cloth woven with metal (threads like those of gold or silver) and should not wear ornaments. She should never sleep at day time or on bedsteads, except in emergency.

67. She should never eat betel-leaves, smear the body with oil or unguents and use collyrium. She should always be afraid of association with men like that with a black serpent.

68. With the exception of Goddess Lakṣmī only there is no woman who is not subject to infatuation after seeing a man.

69. Hence a woman, established in religious duties and desirous of one's beatitude, should not look at a male form or touch him intently.

70. She should perform religious observance, like Kṛcchra, Cāndrāyaṇa and others regularly. She should be always engaged in observing restraints.

71. A young woman should not stay in a solitary place even with father, sons etc. or with a young man. She should absolutely dissociate herself from bad company.

72. A woman whether a widow or one with her husband alive, should never conceal her period of menstruation. For three nights (during this period) she should not touch a human being and other (objects etc.).

73. On the first day of menstruation, she is called (i.e. is equated with) a Cāṇḍāla woman, on the second day, a Brāhmaṇa-killer, on the third day, a washer-women. On the fourth day, she becomes purified.

74. Thus the duties of women have been briefly narrated to you. Those women who abide by them will attain great happiness here and hereafter.

CHAPTER TWENTYTHREE

Duties of Forest-Hermits and Recluses

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

1. O sage, I shall now narrate to you the religious restraints to be observed by forest-hermits. The third part of life is known as the third Āśrama.

2. One should enter a forest (forest-hermit's life) with one's wife, if she is agreeable in serving one's self, is averse to objects of enjoyment, and likes to perform penance.

3. Otherwise, after ordering his sons and others for her maintenance and protection,[1] he, being free from worldly attachment, should enter the forest alone.

4. Interested in performing penance and remaining vigilant, he should stay there fearlessly. He should construct a cottage for (sacrificial) fire, but should stay outside.

5. Having subdued his anger and sense-organs, he should perform the *Pañcāgni-Sādhana* (with four fires on four sides around him and the fifth fire, the sun, above) in Summer, stay in water during winter, and remain in showers in rainy season.[2]

6. He should wear garments made of grass or leaves or bark-garment or hide of a deer. He should eat corn prescribed for sages (i.e. which grows up naturally without tilling the soil) or bulbous roots or fruits grown in the forest.

7. He should eat food which is boiled on fire or heated in the sun, or not boiled at all. If that is not available, (he should eat it) powered in mortar of his teeth.[3]

8. One should personally bring food everyday at the proper time. At (emergent) times, he may accept food brought by others, but never at any other time.

9. When there is no emergency (i.e. normally), he should not accept corn from tilled soil. He should perform the religious worship of (sacrificial) fire with wild corn (grown naturally in a forest).

10. He should retain his waterpot of gourd, the (religious) staff and the articles required for maintenance of sacrificial fire. He should

1. See *Manu* VI.3; *Yājñavalkya* III.45.
2. Cf. *Manu* VI.23-34, *Yājñavalkya* III.52.
3. *Manu* VI 16-17

bear (grow) without cutting or trimming hair on the head and the body, mustaches, beard and nails and unscrubbed teeth.[1]

11. He should bathe without massaging his limbs (for cleansing), and should sleep on bare ground. He should perform penance according to the exigencies of place, time, his power and state of health.

12. Forest-hermits are spoken of as belonging to four classes, viz. Phenapa, Audumbara, Vālakhilya and Vaikhānasa.[2]

13. One should according to one's (physical) capacity stay in the forest (i.e. continue to be a forest-hermit) for twelve, eight, four, two or one year, and then take to the stage of Saṁnyāsa (recluse).

14. If one has intense *Vairāgya* (aversion against objects of worldly pleasures), the (adoption of) Saṁnyāsa is beneficial. Otherwise a Brāhmaṇa should stay in the forest (i.e. continue the stage of forest-hermit) throughout (the rest of) his life.

15. After renunciation as per injunctions, one who has (entered and) established oneself in the fourth Āśrama (stage of life), he should wear a small piece (strip) of cloth to cover the privities, and a patched garment.

16. He should possess a (religious) staff, a waterpot of gourd and a piece of cloth for straining water.[3]

17. A recluse should not beg alms in the house of the same person everyday. He should never be longing for flavourous food. He should take food once (per day) and that too limited (in quantity).

18. A mendicant should generally accept alms from a person who is a forest-hermit. His (mendicant's) mind gets purified by the extremely pure food of the forest-hermit.

19. Even if he has smelt meat and wine, he should perform the expiatory observance called *pārāka*. He should get purified by observing purificatory rites. He should not even touch Śūdras and other (defiled) persons.

20. He should always perform the worship of Viṣṇu and eat what has been offered to Viṣṇu (i.e. offer that food first to Viṣṇu before eating it). He should mutter the twelve-syllabled (*oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*) or eight-syllabled (*oṁ nārāyaṇāya namaḥ*) Mantra of Viṣṇu.

21. He should not utter falsehood. He should not be a story-teller

1. *Manu* VI.6.

2. See *Vaikhānasa* VIII.7 and *Bṛhatparāśara* Ch XI, p. 290. The Purāṇic author seems to have borrowed from both.

3. Cf *Manu* VI.43-44; also *Mitākṣarā* on *Yājñavalkya* III.58.

for his livelihood. He should not be addicted to false (heretic) Śāstras or scriptures, nor should he follow a vocation for maintaining himself.

22. He should study true (non-heretic) scriptures which expound bondage and liberation. He should build a hut or a convent. He should give up the sense of 'I' and 'my' (personal pride and craving for possession).

23. Except for the period of four months of rainy season (*Cāturmāsya*), he should not stay at one place except under duress or in emergency. He should realize by knowledge, the real form of his soul and that of Hari.

24. A recluse (*Yati*) should never entertain desire, anger, fear, enmity and avoid storage of wealth, grains of corn etc. He should practise moral restraints and observances.

25. A recluse though endowed with deep knowledge and intense aversion to objects of worldly enjoyment becomes fallen by contacts with a woman, wealth, ornaments, garments.

26. A renunciator (*Saṁnyāsin*) should give up (enjoyment of) flowers, sandal, oil and other fragrant materials; otherwise he will entertain the (mis-)conception of the identity of the body with the soul.

27. The extent to which one takes food to that extent lust for women will take possession of him. Hence limited, tasteless meal is beneficial to a renunciator.

28. Vulgar speech should not be heard by one who is desirous of attaining liberation. By hearing it liking for listening to the stories of Viṣṇu instantaneously disappears.

29. A renunciator should not see or touch the painting of a woman. Many ascetics have fallen by merely the sight of a woman's form.

30. According to difference in detachment Sannyāsins are classified as *Kuṭīcaka, Bahūda, Haṁsa* and *Paramahaṁsa.*[1]

31. Those who wear ochre-coloured garments and those who are future sages should perform work for me, including cooking etc., though

1. *Kuṭīcakas* live in their own house or in a hut built by their sons, and beg alms at the house of their sons or relatives.

Bahūdas have three staffs, a water-jar, ochre-coloured garments and beg alms at seven houses

Haṁsas stay not more than one night in a village, five nights in a town for alms or subsist on cow's urine or dung or perform Cāndrāyana penance.

Paramahaṁsas stay under a tree or in a burning-ground. They either wear a garment or are naked. They bear (with equanimity) pairs like pleasure-pain. They treat all alike. Their is the highest stage of Sannyāsa. (*Vide Vaikhānasa Sūtra* VIII. 9)

they may be in the fourth stage (i.e. Sannyāsa).

32. The religious duty of the devotees of Śrī Vāsudeva endowed with intense aversion to objects of worldly pleasure is proclaimed as his (i.e. Vāsudeva's) service, day and night.

33. Not a single moment of those endowed with profound knowledge, both spiritual and secular, is vain (wasted) without being engaged in some form of devotion consisiting of nine types.

34. The devotees of Viṣṇu should straightaway abandon a person who, though endowed with all good qualities, is averse to the Lord, even if that person happens to be a relative.

35. People who are the followers of Kṛṣṇa should eat everyday the food which is offered to Hari, is sprinkled with the water with which his feet are washed, and mixed with leaves of Tulasī plant.

36. Contact with women or those who are addicted to women, should be totally avoided by persons meditating on Viṣṇu. Otherwise they will be meditating on them (i.e. women).

37. There is definitely no other man, except the venerable Lord Vāsudeva, who is not infatuated in looking at a woman.

38. A renunciator (i.e. a recluse) should never stay at a place by occupying which one frequently hears the speech and gets the sight of women. If he stays there, he falls from his religious duty.

39. Desire, greed, taste for flavours, affection, pride, anger—these six defects should be avoided with special efforts, as they lead to Saṁsāra.

40. If there be failure in observing any of the religious duties proclaimed here, it should be expiated to the best of one's capacity as per religious injunctions.

41. Thus the religious duties of four *Varṇas* and *Āśramas* as well as those of Vaiṣṇavas have been briefly proclaimed by me, O Nārada.

42. A religious student (*Brahmacārin*) and a *Sannyāsin* who are established in their (particular) religious duties go to Brahmaloka. Forest-hermits go to the world of Sages and householders to Svarga (heaven).

43. All those persons who with devotion follow the duties pertaining to Viṣṇu, attain to the region of Viṣṇu after death.

CHAPTER TWENTYFOUR

The Nature of Knowledge[1]

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

1. Now I shall relate to you the nature of knowledge as determined by Sāṁkhya, whereby Kṣetra and others are known. That knowledge is being explained.

2. Vāsudeva is the Supreme Brahman in the great imperishable abode. At the beginning he was only one without a second and attributeless, with a divine (or refulgent) body.

3. Just as night disappears in the light of the sun, so the Primordial Nature along with its evolutes and Time became invisible in his imperishable light.

4. When the desire to create cosmoses or universes occurred to him, then that great Māyā along with Time manifested herself at the beginning.

5. Taking that power of Time, Vāsudeva with a desire to create, saw her with his *Akṣara* (imperishable) Self. Then she got agitated.

6. From her (Mahāmāyā) crores of Pradhānas (or Prakṛtis) and Puruṣas were born. Due to the will of the Lord those Puruṣas are united with Pradhānas (or Prakṛtis).

7. In them Puruṣas deposited foetuses. From them were born innumerable Brahmāṇḍas (Cosmic Eggs). Out of them, one is described.

8. From the golden semen of the Puruṣa, at first (the principle called) *Mahat* was born (evolved). From it (i.e. *Mahat*) was evolved *Ahaṁkāra* (i.e. Cosmic Ego). From it (i.e. Cosmic Ego)were evolved the three Guṇas—Sattva etc.

9. From (Guṇa) Tamas five *Tamātras* (i.e. subtle elements) and gross elements were evolved. From (Guṇa) Rajas were evolved ten organs (of sense and action), the great (principle of) Life along with *Buddhi* (intelligence).

10. From (Guṇa) Sattva are born the deities presiding over the organs (of sense and action) and also Manas (mind). Ordinarily what are designated as *Tattva* (principles) are called (here) Devas.

1. This chapter gives a combination of the theistic Sāṁkhya theory of evolution of the universe as well as the Purāṇic concept of Viṣṇu creating Brahmā for the same.

11. Impelled by Vāsudeva, they gave birth to (i.e. created) a divine body called *Virāṭ*, by contributing their individual parts. That (Virāṭ) was the resort of the movable and immovable.

12. That Vairāja-Puruṣa slept on the waters created by him. Hence he is proclaimed as Nārāyaṇa by Vedas and such other (scriptural texts).

13. From the lotus (grown out) of his navel was born Brahmā, characterised by Rajoguṇa. Viṣṇu of Sattva character was born from the lotus of his heart. And Hara characterised by Tamas was born from his forehead.

14. From these very places three Śaktis were born. Out of them Durgā was characterised by Tamas, Sāvitrī by Rajas, Śrī is characterised by Sattva Guṇa. All of them are adorned with garments and ornaments.

15. By the order of Vairāja, they betook themselves to Brahmā and others. Durgā resorted to Rudra, Sāvitrī to Brahmā and the last (Śrī) to Viṣṇu.

16. Thousands of Śaktis including Caṇḍikā were (born) from a part of Durgā; Śaktis of whom Trayī was prominent were born of part of Sāvitrī. Śaktis of which Dussahā was the chief one were born from a part of Śrī, O sage.

17. He who was Brahmā born of the navel-lotus of Vairāja and was staying in the lotus in that Ekārṇava did (could) not see (know) anything.

18. Not having acquired the knowledge of creation, he did not know himself. Meditating 'who am I', 'whence have I come?', he happened to see the Lotus which was his resort.

19. A period of hundred years elapsed while he entered the stalk of the Lotus, and went downwards to discover the root (of the lotus), but he could not get at the end of it.

20. Coming up again and feeling exhausted, he sat down. The Lord in his invisible form spoke to him, "Perform penance; perform penance."

21. Having heard it and not being able to see the speaker anywhere, he performed penance for a period of one thousand divine years, as advised by the preceptor.

22. To him who was performing penance in the Lotus and was of purified soul, Acyuta showed his place of residence (called) Vaikuṇṭha while he was in profound meditation.

23. (*Obscure*) Where there are the three Guṇas, Rajas etc. evolved out of Pradhāna, there exists not the smallest, which has no fear from Kāla (Time, Death) and Māyā.

24. In that refulgent light brilliant like the simultaneous rising of ten thousand suns, there he saw Vāsudeva of beautiful, lustrous, dark form.

25. That Supreme Ruler had four arms holding (in each) an iron mace, a lotus, a conch and a discus. He wore a yellow garment and was adorned with a big crown set with jewels (and other ornaments).

26. He was resorted to by four-armed attendants like Nanda, Tārkṣya (Garuḍa) and others, by eight super-natural powers (like *Aṇimā* etc.) and by six types of good luck with their palms folded in reverence.

27. Bowing down to the great Lord who sat along with Śrī on the throne, God Brahmā, delighted in mind, stood before him with folded palms.

28. The Lord spoke to him: "O Brahman, I am pleased with you due to your penance. As you are dear to me, ask for any boon desired by you, from me."

29. Addressed by him thus, Brahmā knowing him to be his director to perform penance, entreated him (to grant) the boon desired by him regarding the creation of the universe.

30. "Obeisance to you, O Lord! Give me the power to create. Do also to me such favour as will not bind me in that (act of creation)."

31. Then the Lord said: "Your desire will be fulfilled. Create subjects by conceiving through meditation your identity with me, Vairāja. If any task is not possible for you to accomplish, I should be remembered. I am the donor of desired objects."

32. After saying Viṣṇu vanished. Brahmā, by meditating on his identity with Vairāja, saw personally all the regions (or subjects) which were merged formerly.

33. Having secured the creative power, Brahmā set his mind on creation. In the meanwhile, Āditya (Sun-god) full of the lustre of Brahman, manifested himself.

34. Having established him at the centre of Brahmāṇḍa (universe), he created by his mind which was extremely pure due to penance and devotion, the four primeval sages, the four Sanas (viz. Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumāra, Sanātana).

35. He ordered them, "Create subjects". Those who were prominent perpetual celibate (sages), did not accept his order. The creator of the universe got angry with them.

36. From the forehead of angry Brahmā was born Rudra full of the Guṇa called Tamas. Controlling his anger, he mentally created Prajāpatis (presiders over the subjects).

37. (They were as follow:) Marīci, Atri, Pulaha, Pulastya, Bhṛgu,

Kratu, Vasiṭṣṭha, Kardama, Dakṣa and Angiras.

38. He created Dharma from his heart, Adharma from (his) back, sexual desire (Kāma) from (his) mind, Speech from mouth and Anger from his eyebrow.

39. Then from his four faces (mouths) he created the feet of Dharma, viz. Purity, Penance, Compassion and Truth.

40. He created Ṛgveda from his eastern face, Yajurveda from the southern face, Sāmaveda from the western and Atharvan from the northern face.

41. From his mouth he created Itihāsa, Purāṇas, sacrifices, a hundred Brāhmaṇas, (gods such as) Vasus, Ādityas, Maruts, Viśvedevas, and Sādhyas.

42. He created a hundred Kṣatriyas from his arms, a hundred Vaiśyas from his thighs and a hundred Śūdras from his feet—all along with their professions and modes of livelihood.

43. He created the (stage of life called) Brahmacarya (celibate-studentship) from his heart, householdership from his loins (genital organ?), forest-hermitship from his chest and Sannyāsa from his head.

44. He created a clan called Pitṛs (manes) from his chest, Asuras from his buttocks, the god of death, Nirṛti and hells from his anus.

45-46. God Brahmā who thus identified his soul with Nārāyaṇa created from the limbs of the body the following: Gandharvas, Cāraṇas, Siddhas, serpents, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, mountains, clouds, lightnings, seas, rivers, trees, beasts (animals), birds and all movables and immovables.

47. When he was not much pleased with this creation, he meditated on Hari and created with penance, learning and concentration, sages, Svāyaṁbhuva and other Manus, and human beings.

48. Then being satisfied, he created for their residence Svarloka (heaven), Bhuvarloka (the world above the earth) and Bhūrloka (earth).

49. God Brahmā established them in places that they deserved by their Karmas in the previous Kalpa, and assigned to them their particular vocations.

50. He assigned nectar (*Amṛta*) to Devas, food and (medicinal) herbs to men and sages, wine and meat to Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, Asuras, tigers, serpents and others. For cows, bulls and deer he provided (grains of corn such as) barley etc.

51. He fixed *Havya* (oblations in the fire) as the livehood for all Devas, and assigned *Kavya* to all embodied and non-embodied manes.

52. To the Śaktis born of Goddess Durgā, (he allotted) wine, meat

etc. offered by Daityas, Rākṣasas, Piśācas and others who eagerly engaged in propitiating them.

53. Similarly to the Śaktıs created from Sāvitrī, (he allotted) eatables fit for sages, such as food and herbs offered in sacrifices by sages, the propitiators of those Śaktis.

54. To Śaktis born of Śrī, (he fixed) *Pāyasa* (rice boiled in milk), ghee, radish etc. offered by Devas, Asuras and human beings who are engaged in propitiating them.

55-56. Then the Lord of Prajāpatis addressed all his subjects: "Devas and Pitṛs are to be worshipped by sacrifices consisting (of the offerings) of *Havya* and *Kavya*. These (deities) will fufill all your desired objectives. Those who will not worship them will surely go to hell."

57. In this way, the moral law was fixed by Brahmā, entered into by Nārāyaṇa. Hence ritualistic acts pertaining to Devas and Pitṛs should always be performed as per injunctions.

58. Then Brahmā appointed the heads of those particular castes and categories as well as Manus for the protection of the bounds of moral law of all.

59. O sage! It is in this way that this diverse creation takes place in every Kalpa by Vairāja in the form of Brahmā, by the will of Vāsudeva.

60. Just as the knowledge, Vedas, Śāstras and ritualistic rites were in the previous Kalpa, in the next Kalpa similar were all Dharmas and the persons authorized and functionaries.[1]

61. He who is called Viṣnu is also of the nature of (possessed by) Vairājā-Puruṣa. He observes all the boundaries and sustains (by) nourishing all the worlds.

62. When the limits (of moral behaviour etc.) which are being observed by Manu and others are broken (violated) by Asuras, who can assume any form they like, then Vāsudeva, being prayed to by God Brahmā and others, manifests himself on the earth.

63. It is not possible to count the number of the Lord's incarnations past and future even by experts in calculation.

64. The manifestation of the noble Lord is for the protection of Saddharma (righteousness, moral order), Devas and saintly persons, for killing those who trouble them and for the welfare of all beings.[2]

1 Cf *dhātā vathāpūrvam akalpayat/*
2. Cf BG IV.8

65. That Vāsudeva, the sovereign ruler of all, who is connected with Prakṛti, Puruṣa and all their products (evolutes) stays aloof from them in his own domain.

66. Just as Fire-god, Varuṇa and others permeate this world with their parts and stay happily in their respective regions, so does this Lord, O sage.

67. Just as he was Existence, Consciousness and Bliss (incarnate), pure, one and attributeless before the creation of the universe, so he is of equal, unsullied, pure, nature though he is connected (with the universe).

68. Just as sky, though permeating the products or effects of the (elements) wind, fire, water, earth, remains unsmeared by them, similarly he remains so (untouched and pure).

69. He deserves to be propitiated and to be worshipped by all. He is the controller. He is glorified as pervader (of the universe). Even in the final dissolution (of the world) he becomes as before (without any change).

70. He who is called here Vairāja Puruṣa, is designated as Supreme Ruler. He should be known as independent, omniscient and the controller of Māyā, O Nārada.

71. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, the three who are endowed with Guṇas like Rajas etc. and whose activities are in consonance with their Guṇas are nothing but forms of that (Lord).

72. Devas, Asuras, human beings who are born of Brahmā are designated as *Jīvas*. They possess little knowledge and are dependent on others.

73. The bodies of living beings and Īśvaras are named *Kṣetra*. They are constituted of the principles like Mahat and others. The knower of these (bodies) is called *Kṣetrajña*.

74. The knowledge of *Kṣetras* (physical bodies), *Kṣetrajñas* (knowers of the *Kṣetra*), Pradhāna (Prakṛti), Puruṣa, Māyā, Kāla (the power of destruction) and the imperishable Supreme Soul with all their differentiated characteristics is called the (real) knowledge.[1]

1. Cf BG XIII.2, 3.

CHAPTER TWENTYFIVE

Vairāgya and Bhakti

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

1. O excellent sage, I shall now describe to you the characteristics of *Vairāgya*. It is complete disinterest in all perishable objects.

2. Whatever forms there are, right from Māyā-Puruṣa, all of them are destroyed by the destructive power (*Kāla Śakti*) of the Lord, as they are subject to his control.

3. The unreality of created objects and the reality of souls have been determined by knowledgeable persons through direct perception, inference and scriptural authority.

4. *Kāla* (Death, god of destruction) moves in the form of *Nitya* (daily), *Naimittika* (periodical), *Prākṛtika* (of Prakṛti, Primordial Nature) and *Ātyantika* (final or absolute) Pralayas[1] (destruction).

5. These bodies of souls which are subject to change and in which the stages of childhood, youth and old age are seen in that order, always go on decaying.[2]

6. The process of decay is not noticed as that of the flame of a lamp, or the growth and development of a fruit at every step on the tree, is not seen.

7. In its final stage, great grief is observed. In the stages of wakefulness and others (such as dream, sleep), there is frequent recurrence of grief.

8. Embodied beings suffer terrible misery and pain proceeding from bodily and mental causes and from elements (and other beings) and caused by divine, planetary and supernatural factors.

9. As a result of it, people lament like: "Alas! My son died; my wife is dying; a tiger ate up my father; my daughter-in-law was bitten by a snake.

10-14. Alas! all my belongings are burnt down in the great fire of my mansion. How can I maintain my family as God Indra did not shower rains?

1. Though these are the four Pralayas (destructions of the world) as described in other Purāṇas, the concepts of Nitya and Ātyantika Pralayas are a bit different here.

2. VV 5-18a describe the Nitya-pralaya. V 13 mentions abduction of wife and sister by Mlecchas.

My farm was rich with crops, but Alas, it is blighted by the intensity of winter! My cows are taken away by robbers! Everything in my possession (property) is plundered!

I am severely punished by the king! I am severely beaten by my enemy! What should I do? Whom can I tell that my mother was adulterous?

Alas, the enemy abducted my wife today! I shall drink poison. Alas, my sister is carried away (forcibly) by Mlecchas! Alas, my enemy, the penetrator of my weak points and secrets, has arrived!

I am dying of the excruciating pain of fever. Alas, these are the messengers of Yama, the god of Death!"

Everywhere people are seen lamenting like this.

15. Every moment undergoing birth and death of their bodily states, in the course of time men suffer from pain originating from themselves (i.e. as a result of their own Karmas).

16. The pain of death at the end of the pre-destined period (of sufferings and life) is unparalleled. Even after death, extreme suffering—torture inflicted by the god of Death—is undergone.

17. Getting birth again and again in the species of beings such as viviparous, germinating ones (plants etc.), sweat-born, egg-born, according to one's Karmas one dies with pain.

18a. Thus far the *Nitya Pralaya* (daily destruction) has been described to you with minute observation. You should understand it.

18b. Now, O sage, I shall describe to you the *Pralaya* called *Naimittika* (periodic).[1]

19. The Destruction that is occasioned by the Night of the Creator of the universe (Brahmā) is called the *Naimittika* (periodic) Dissolution or Destruction. It occurs on everyday (of God Brahmā).

20. O sage, the day of the Creator of the universe consits of one thousand Caturyugas (groups of four Yugas). His night is also of that duration. Both together (the day and night of Brahmā) are called Kalpa.

21. In each day of God Brahmā, there are fourteen Manus, the protectors of bounds of Dharma, O Brāhmaṇa.

22-24. The first Manu is Svāyambhuva, then (the next Manu is) Svārociṣa. Next to him (consecutively) are Uttama, Tāmasa, then Raivata and Cākṣuṣa, Śrāddhadeva (i.e. Vaivasvata), Sāvarṇi, Bhautya, Raucya, then (Manu) called Brahma-Sāvarṇi, Rudra-Sāvarṇi, then (Manu) named Meru-Sāvarṇi and the last is Dakṣa-Sāvarṇi[2].

1. VV 18b-45 describe Naimittika Pralaya (caused by the night of God Brahmā).
2 The list slightly differs from that in VāP and PE (p. 403).

25. The period of each Manu is seventy-one Yugas. Twelve thousand years of Devas make one Yuga (= Mahāyuga).

26. At the end of the fourteen Manvantaras, the evening of the Creator of the universe sets in, O excellent sage.

27. At the end of the Day (of Brahmā), Vairāja withdraws the powers that sustain the world. Rudra whose soul is Vairāja, then desires to destroy the world.

28. At first there is a terrific drought lasting for a hundred years. Then all living beings of meagre strength on the earth perish entirely.

29-30. Intensely powerful rays of the Saṁvartaka Sun drink up all liquid from the nether world. Having dried up quickly all water of the lakes, rivers and seas on the earth, the Sun leads all peoples (or regions) to destruction.

31. Then the earth, bereft of all moisture and with all movables and immovables destroyed, becomes bald like the back of a tortoise, extremely dry and shrivelled.

32. Then Rudra in the form of destructive fire emanates from the mouth of Śeṣa, and it burns down the seven nether worlds, the earth, Bhuvarloka and Svarloka (the heaven).

33. The Kālāgni ('the fire of world destruction') which has burnt down the worlds and is terrible with its spiral flames, returns after devastating Maharloka.

34. Devas dwelling in the Bhuvar- and Svar-loka (the heaven), who are deprived of their posts and powers, become extremely tormented by the flames of that fire and proceed from Maharloka to Janaloka.

35. Sages, the followers of the path of Nivṛtti ('abstaining' from ritualistic acts—Karma) who attained state of Siddhas, go for the same reason from the earth to the world of Sages (Ṛṣiloka).

36. Then terrific clouds for destroying the world (called Saṁvartaka clouds) rise up in the sky. They look like a crowd of elephants. They are possessed of lightning, and thunder violently.

37. Some are smoke-coloured; some yellow-coloured. Some are white like night-lotus. Some are red like liquid lac; some like the wing of a blue jay.

38. Extinguishing the great fire they shower with heavy torrents for a hundred years incessantly, day and night. Those thundering thick clouds fill up the interior of the Brahmāṇḍa up to the Polar Star.

39. In that vast sheet of water of that general inundation, on a bed of the (body of the) great Serpent, Lord Vairāja Puruṣa called Aniruddha lies (sleeps).

40-42. Those who have realized the identity of Brahman and Self, and have brought under control the three Guṇas and propitiate Vāsudeva by Nivṛtti Dharma, make their residence in the four worlds of Mahar etc. and stay there as they please, praising Vairāja.

43. Lord Nārāyaṇa, meditating on the form of the Supreme Soul called Vāsudeva, lies absorbed in Yogic sleep.

44. At the end of (Brahmā's) night, all those beings residing in his belly (during the *Pralaya* period) along with Brahmā are produced again as before, authorized for the same Karma as before.

45. In this way, the *Pralaya* called *Naimittika* ('periodic') characterised by the destruction of the three worlds has been narrated to you. Now I shall describe the *Prākṛta Pralaya* (Destruction of *Prakṛti* or Primordial Nature)[1].

46. What has been described (up till now) is a Kalpa. Three hundred and sixty periods of that duration constitute the year of God Brahmā.

47. Fifty of them (Brahmā's year) constitute a Parārdha; two such Parārdhas constitute the life-span of Brahmā. When the period of time called *Para* (Brahmā's complete span of life) is completed, there takes place a great annihilation.

48. After withdrawing his form called Virāj by the Rudra form of destruction, Vairāja desires to go (i.e. revert) to his supreme attributeless form.

49. At that time, there is a drought (a rain-less period) of a hundred years as before (at the time of *Nitya Pralaya*). The fire of destruction born of Saṅkarṣaṇa (Śeṣa) completely burns down Brahmāṇḍa (the universe).

50. Then the extremely terrible clouds called Saṁvartaka pour down torrents of water, (each) as big as a pestle, for a hundred years, O sage.

51. Then by the will of Vāsudeva, there is a complete destruction of all the evolutes of Prakṛti beginning with *Mahat* and ending with *Viśeṣas* (i.e. peculiar attributes distinguishing *Dravyas*).

52. The (elemental) Water at first 'swallows' up smell (*Gandha*) which is a special quality of the (element) Earth. The Earth devoid of (its special quality) smell, becomes dissolved.

53. The (elemental) Fire swallows *Rasa* (liquid form), a special quality of Water, which thereby merges therein. The (elemental) Wind

1. VV 45-58 describe the Prākṛta Pralaya i.e. destruction of Prakṛti (the original cause of the universe) itself. It takes place after the life-span of God Brahmā terminates.

'devours' *Rūpa* (colour), the special quality of Fire (*Tejas*) and it (the elemental Fire) merges therein.

54. The (elemental) *Ākaśa* (Ether) then swallows up touch which is a special quality of Wind. Wind then calms down (and ceases to exist). Ether stands uncovered.

55. *Bhūtādi* (the origin of *Bhūtas*) swallows sound, the distinguishing quality of Ether and Ether merges therein.

The Indriyas (i.e. organs of sense and action) become merged in the *Taijasa Ahaṁkāra*.

56. In the Sāttvika type of *Ahaṁkāra*, the deities and manas get merged. That which is produced or evolved from a thing gets merged in that, i.e. its source of origin.

57. The three types of *Ahaṁkāra* (produced from the three Guṇas i.e. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) are dissolved in the principle called *Mahat*. That becomes merged in *Pradhāna* which in turn is dissolved in *Puruṣa*. It is then dissolved in the Mūla Prakṛti (Primordial Prakṛti).

58. This *Pralaya* called *Prākṛtika* is (thus) described. In this, by the will of Hari, the masters of living beings become concealed in *Avyakta* (i.e. the unmanifest primordial principle from which all the phenomena of the material world are developed).

59. When Māyā, Puruṣa and Kāla get merged in the imperishable refulgence by the Lord's will, then the Lord alone exists (without a second). That *Pralaya* is called *Ātyantika* (Final or Absolute), O Nārada.[1]

60. All this is rendered like *Asat* (non-being) by the four kinds of dissolutions by the power called Kāla (Time) of the Lord. Non-attachment or dislike of it is called Vairāgya.

61. Knowing that all gods other than Vāsudeva are subject to Kāla (Destruction) and Māyā, and giving up liking (devotion) for them, continuous service with deep affection to him exclusively, is known as *Bhakti* (devotion).

62-63. He who serves him respectfully with his mind exclusively devoted to him, with the nine *Bhāvas*[2] ('types of devotions'), viz. listening (to the stories etc. of the Lord), glorifying (the Lord), remembering (him), bowing to the Lord's feet, worshipping (him), paying obeisance (to him), servitude, (establishing) friendship with him and (complete) self-surrender, is called a *Bkakta* (a devotee).

64. The Devotion that is accompanied with three chief duties

1. This is the concept of Ātyantika Pralaya of this Purāṇa.
2. These are the usual nine types of Bhakti.

(*dharma*) of oneself is called *Ekāntika Dharma*. It is the Bhāgavata Dharma.[1]

65. This *Ekāntika Dharma* is known by men by direct contact with the Lord or with his devotees of this (above described) nature, but never otherwise.

66. To men who are desirous of Mokṣa, there is no other means like this, which brings the final beatitude to men, and is destructive of all inauspicious and evil things.

67. For the accomplishment of *Ekānta-dharma*, he should devote himself to *Kriyā Yoga*. Thereby a man attains to the stage wherein one is exempted from the consequences of the Karmas, O excellent sage.

68. This great doctrine (Tattva) kept as secret in Vedas and Purāṇas, which destroys the flood of sins, has been described by me. It should be attended to with concentration of mind, with pure intellect, and with ardent faith, O great sage.

69. There is nothing more sanctifying than Vāsudeva. Nothing is more auspicious than Vāsudeva. No deity is greater than Vāsudeva. There is nothing that is desired other than Vāsudeva.

70. Take resort to Vāsudeva whose name, if one unknowingly utters at the time of death here, he, even if he be a Puṣkasa (an outcaste), is relieved (saved) from the stream of Saṁsāra.

CHAPTER TWENTYSIX

Eligibility for Kriyā-Yoga etc.

Skanda said:

1. Having heard the exposition of the *Ekānta Dharma* as done by the Lord (Nārāyaṇa), Nārada, who was greatly delighted in mind, asked him again.

Nārada said:

2. O Master, having heard the *Ekāntika Dharma* as has been

1. VV 64ff. give the concept of Ekānta Dharma or Bhāgavata Dharma. For the accomplishment of this Dharma Kriryā-yoga is essential.

excellently expounded by you, a great joy has been engendered in my mind.

3. I wish to know the *Kriyā-Yoga* ('the employment of means') as approved by you, which is said to contribute to its accomplishment.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

4. Performance of worship as per injunctions is declared as the *Kriyā-Yoga* of Vāsudeva. It is described in different ways in the Vedas and the Tantras.

5. Due to differences in tastes or desires of devotees and to diversity in the forms (i.e. icons) of Vāsudeva, it (i.e. Kriyā-Yoga) is vast and varied.

6. Verily, there will be no end to it, if it were to be described in its entirety. Hence, I shall narrate to you briefly (the Kriyā-Yoga) which enhances devotion.

7. Here (for this Kriyā-Yoga) those who have received initiation in Vaiṣṇava faith, whether men or women of the four castes or of the four stages of life (*āśramas*)—all are eligible.[1]

8. Persons of the twice-born castes should worship with Mantras—Vedic, Tāntric and Purāṇic—and also with the Mula-Mantra. Women who are initiated and pious Śūdras (should do so) with Mūla-Mantra. The Mūla-Mantra is six-syllabled and pertains to Śrīkṛṣṇa (i.e. it is *srīkṛṣṇāya namaḥ*).

9. Vāsudeva should be devoutly worshipped with guileless hearts by all these who observe their respective *dharma* (religious duties) as per prescribed procedure.

10-11. At first a man should receive the Vaiṣṇava type of initiation from a spiritual preceptor of Brāhmaṇa caste, who is always engaged in (i.e. established in) *Ekāntika Dharma*, and is a store of mercy. He should have spiritual knowledge and devotion. He who is devoid of (i.e does not abide by) his personal religious duty and a person whose heart is captivated by women should never be accepted as a spiritual preceptor.

12. If one gets initiation from a preceptor who is a womanizer, his knowledge and devotion will never bear fruit, like (the impossibility of birth of) a child to a young woman associated with an impotent person.

1. This is a Pāñcarātra work and the procedure of Kriyā is Āgamic. Hence initiation (Dīkṣā) is essential to all irrespective of caste and sex.

13. After getting initiation from a saintly preceptor, one should wear a rosary of Tulasī beads round his neck, and apply the *Ūrdhvapuṇḍra* (vertical-lined) marks of white clay called *Gopīcandana* on the forehead (and other parts of the body).

14. A devotee who is inclined to Viṣṇu-worship, should thoroughly understand from his preceptor the procedure of worship as prescribed in the Āgamas.

15. Getting up in the last watch of the night,[1] the devotee, either at the Brāhma Muhūrta (the last half watch of the night) or for half a Muhūrta (i.e. 24 minutes) should metitate in his heart on Keśava, the destroyer of all afflictions.

16. After glorifying the names of him and his (devotees) for one *Ghaṭī* (24 minutes), he should perform purificatory acts (like evacuating bowels) and should cleanse his teeth.

17. After performing bath for cleansing parts of one's body, he should take bath uttering the mantras. Taking pure earth etc., he should perform *Tarpaṇa* included as a part in the (procedure of) bath.

18. Wearing two washed (and dried) cloths, he should sit on a pure seat. He should mark two vertical lines (of sandal or Gopīcandana) on his forehead, and perform *Sandhyā* (Twilight-prayers), *Homa* (Fire-worship) and *Japa* (muttering of Mantra) and such other religious duties.

19. He should bring (for worship) cloth, sandal, flowers etc. and all offerings untouched by meat, wine and other impure objects.[2]

20. (Those articles of worship) should not have been (previously) offered to Devas or Manes or to others. They should not have been (even) smelt by men and should be devoid of (i.e. should not contain) hair, insects etc.

21. Keeping those (above-mentioned articles) and implements of worship (such as a bell) to the right side, one should then fill completely the lamp with ghee or oil.

22. Then one should seat near oneself the icon of Vāsudeva on a pure wooden seat (*vikāṣṭha* ?) spread over with silken or woollen cloth etc.

23. The idol may be made of stone, metal, wood, precious stone or may be a painted picture. It may be white, red, yellow or black, O sage.

24. The idol of Kṛṣṇa should be made two-handed or four-handed.

1. VV 15-18. The daily routine of the initiated is indicated here.

2. VV 19ff give general instructions about the articles of worship, the types of idols of Viṣṇu to be worshipped.

In the two-handed idol, a flute should be (shown to have been) held in both his hands.

25. Or there should a discus in the right hand and a conch in the other, or a lotus be (made to be held) in the right hand, and the other should show 'grant of security' (protection from fear).

26. In the case of the second (four-armed idol) in the lower right-hand (upper right hand, lower left hand and upper left hand), he should be made to bear an iron mace, a lotus, a conch, and a discus respectively, O excellent sage.

27. In both the types of (Kṛṣṇa) idols, Śrī should be placed on (its) left side. But in case of the idol holding a flute, Rādhā, the queen of Rāsa, should be placed on the left.

28. Even if this idol (be) of two types, the entire (unbroken) idol of auspicious characteristics and endowed with all parts of the body, becomes a conferer of accomplishment of the desires of the worshipper.

29. In the vicinity of Vāsudeva, (the idol of) Lakṣmī should be prepared as two-handed, holding a lotus in one hand and beautified with garments and ornaments.

30. Like Lakṣmī, (the idol of) Rādhikā also should be two-handed, beaming with charming smile and holding a lotus or a garland in her lotus-hand.

31. The idol of Hari is of two types—immovable or movable. In the case of the first (i.e. immovable) one, no formal invocation or send-off should be performed.

32. Invocation etc. of deities forming its parts should not be done. The rule about (facing a particular) direction is not applicable in the case of that (immovable) idol. One should sit facing it.

33. In the case of Śālagrāma (formalities such as) invocation and others should not be performed. But in other cases of movable idols, it should be performed by its worshippers.

34. Even there, in the case of wooden images and a painted one, touch of water (in the formal bath) and application of sandal should never be indulged in by the worshipper. Only wiping-off (of the painting etc.) should be done.

35. With one's face to the North, or the East, or facing the movable image, one should worship Hari with whatever offerings are available according to one's capacity.

36. The Universal Soul becomes pleased even if water is offered with ardent faith and sincere devotion. All the more so in the case of

complete worship (with all *Upacāras*).

37. He does not accept with delight the adornment with jewels and gold ornaments and eatables such as foods of four kinds.

38. Hence, O sage, the worship of Śrīkṛṣṇa who promptly confers the desired objects, should always be performed by a person endowed with devotion for his own final beatitude.

CHAPTER TWENTYSEVEN

Procedure of Pūjā Maṇḍala Construction[1]

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

1. On a piece of ground consecrated by digging, sprinkling, smearing (and such other means) and well-decorated with various colours, a (raised) seat with four legs should be placed.

2. The worshipper with his face to the East should place the legs of the seat in the corners. In those four he should establish Dharma and others in the form of lions (thus making the seat a *simhāsana* for the deity).

3. In the South-East corner *Dharma* of white colour should be placed. So should be placed *Jñāna* (Knowledge) red in colour in the South-West, *Vairāgya* (Absence of worldly desires) yellow in colour in the North-West and *Aiśvarya* (Divine faculties of omnipotence etc.) of dark blue colour in the North-East.

4. In the body-proper of the seat, *Manas* (mind), *Dhī* (intellect), *Citta* (the reasoning faculty or the heart) and *Ahaṁkāra* (the ego), each greenish, red, white and black in colour respectively, should be placed in the directions East etc. respectively.

5. On the strip of the seat all the three *guṇas*, Rajas, Sattva and Tamas, of red, white and black (colour) should be set, O excellent sage.

1. This chapters and the following describe in detail the Āgamic procedure of Viṣṇu worship. This describes the 'city' of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in which dwell gods, goddesses, demi-gods, planets etc. Their person, dress, vehicles etc. are graphically described. Here Śiva in the half-man-half-woman form (Ardha-nārīśvara) is regarded as Kṛṣṇa's attendant. All these form the paraphernalia of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and a representation of their city.

6. Now in the four parts of *Antaḥkaraṇa* (the internal organ consisting of *Manas, Buddhi, Ahaṅkāra* and *Citta*[1] a pair of Śaktis beginning with Vimalā, should be stationed in each part.[2]

7. The two Śaktis, Vimalā and Utkarṣiṇī, fair-compexioned, wearing green garments, excellently decked with ornaments and playing on beautiful lutes, should be placed in the East.

8. The pair of Śaktis, *Jñāna* (Knowledge) and *Kriyā* (Action), red in lustre, clad in yellow garments, one playing on cymbal and the other on a *mṛdaṅga* (tabor or a kind of drum), should be stationed in the South.

9. The two Śaktis, Yogā and Pradhī (*Pradhī*—great intelligence), dark (in complexion), wearing red garments, both together yet independently playing on flutes, should be installed in the West.

10. The pair of Śaktis, Satyā and Īśānā, both of golden complexion, wearing dark blue (green?) garments, both playing on a lute-like musical instrument, should be placed in the North.

11. One called Anugrahā with palms folded in reverence, should be established on the strip (of the *Pīṭha*). All these (Śaktis) should be made two-handed and well-adorned with ornaments.

12. On the seat, *Sitadvīpa* should be prepared with white cloth. In the middle of it a lotus of eight-petals with a brilliant pericarp should be made.

13. One-twelfth of the area should be left outside the lotus. Its middle should be equally divided by three circles.

14. The first circle is the place of the pericarp, the middle, of filaments, the third is of petals and pointed end-portion outside of it.

15. Around it, a city of four gates should be prepared with various kinds of colour-materials like turmeric powder, saffron etc.

16. Lotus-like decorations with rice-grains should be made. The pericarp of golden colour in the middle of the lotus should be well decorated.

17. O sage, the worshipper should prepare around it red-coloured eight petals in eight direction. They may also be of golden colour.

18. The eastern town-gate should be made red (in colour); the southern, dark; the western, yellow in colour and the northern, crystalline in brilliance.

1. Jhalkikar, *Nyāya-kośa*, p.38.

2. In Tāntrika worship, Śaktis are the special deities situated on the seat or throne of the main deity (*pīṭhādhiṣṭhātṛ-devatāviśeṣaḥ*) (Ibid., p.781).

19. In between the 'town' and the lotus, various kinds of flowers (should be spread). In the middle of it Śrīkṛṣṇa with Rādhikā to his left should be installed.

20. At the back of this (pair of) Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa (the worshipper) should then install four-handed Saṅkarṣaṇa, fair in complexion, wearing blue garments, holding an umbrella (over him).

21. On the right side of the Lord one should install four-handed Pradyumna, dark in complexion like a cloud, and wearing yellow garments, standing with a Chowrie in his hand.

22. On the left side of Hari red-garmented Aniruddha of dark-blue complexion like a sapphire, be placed, with a Chowrie in his hand.

23. These three should be adorned with various kinds of ornaments, wearing crowns studded with invaluable jewels, (appearing) beautiful due to youthfulness.

24. Then, in a serial order, the incarnations of Hari should be placed in the eight filaments (petals of the lotus?). A pair of incarnations should be placed in each, (thus placing) sixteen incarnations in the eight *Kesaras.*

25-26. At the front of the eastern filament the worshipper should install Vāmana and Buddha, both of them dark as a cloud (in complexion), compassionate, quiescent, celibate, wearing sacred thread and white garments, holding a full-bloomed lotus in the right hand, the left hand indicating *Abhaya* (protection from fear) by its position.

27-28. In the South-East corner, one should place Kalkin and Paraśurāma. Kalkin has a sword in hand, while the other holds an axe. Both of them should be represented as fair in complexion, red-eyed, having matted hair, wearing the sacred thread and white garments, who have given up anger against great enemies* (rather: great warriors who have given up their anger*).

29-31. One should install Hayagrīva and Varāha in the Southern *Kesara.* Hayagrīva should be horse-headed with a human body, with four hands holding in each conch and others (Viṣṇu's weapons). He should be of golden complexion and wearing divine white-coloured garment.

Varāha hould be boar-faced with human body. He should have four hands holding in each a conch, a discus, an iron pestle and a lotus. He

*In Devanagari script 'ya' (य) and 'tha' (थ) are mistaken for each other due to close resemblance. Hence the reading *mahārayau* be better emended as *mahārathau* 'great warriors'. The line *'tyakta-krodha-mahārathau'* should be interpreted as 'great warriors who have given up their anger'.

should be reddish-brown like honey in complexion and should be yellow-garmented. Or he may be represented as two-handed.

32-33. He should then install the Fish and Tortoise (incarnations of the Lord), in the South-Western Kesara. They should be of the same form (i.e. that of a fish and of a tortoise) below the waist but the upper form should be man-like. Both of them should hold the conch in the left hand and the iron mace in the right hand. Their bodies should be dark yet beautiful and decked with ornaments. They should be prepared (as above description).

34-35. He should place Dhanvantari and Nṛsiṁha in the Western Kesara. Dhanvantari should be of fair complexion, wearing white garments and holding a pitcher containing nectar. Nṛsiṁha should be Lion-faced with a human body (but) full of mane. He should be like a blue lotus in lustre (complexion) and be two-handed holding a mace and a discus (in them).

36. In the North-Western (Kesara) he should install Haṁsa and Dattātreya, both with matted hair, in yogic attire, white in complexion, holding a staff and water-gourd in their hands.

37-40. In the Northern Kesara he should then install Vyāsa and Gaṇapati. There Vyāsa should be of wide eyes, black in complexion, white-garmented with excellent tawny matted hair. He should be made (represented) as having two hands, holding the Vedas, wearing a white sacred thread and a ring of Darbha grass round his fingers.

The god Gaṇapati should be elephant-faced(-headed) with one tusk. He should be red (in complexion) and red-garmented, with a snake as a sacred thread. He should be fat, four-handed, holding excellent noose and goad and in one holding excellent pen (for writing) books.

41. The worshipper should place Kapila and Sage Sanatkumāra, a permanent celibate, in the North-Eastern Kesara.

42. Kapila should be made (shown) as having a while-complexioned body, wearing a beautiful white garment, holding a lotus in one hand and assuring freedom from fear with the other, and of a quiet personality.

43. By the worshipper the sage Sanatkumāra should be made to appear like a five-year old child. He should be naked and with slight matted hair.

44. After installing these deities in the filaments of the lotus in this way, the worshipper should install the attendants in the middle of eight petals.

45-47. One should at first place Viṣvaksena and Garuḍa to the East.

Then in the right-handed (clockwise) arrangement he should install a pair of these attendants per petal. Attendants Prabala and Bala (in the South-East), Kumuda and Kumudākṣa (in the South), Sunanda and Nanda (in the South-West), Śrutadeva and Jayanta (in the West). (He should place) Vijaya and Jaya (in the North-West), then Pracaṇḍa and Caṇḍa (in the North) and Puṣpadanta and Sāttvata (in the North-East).

48. All these should be made four-handed, holding a conch, a discus, a lotus and an iron-club (in each hand), wearing crowns and yellow-garments. (They should be) dark in complexion and beautified with excellent ornaments.

49-50. In the intervening space of the eight petals, Siddhi-deities, all experts in playing on auspicious musical instruments, should be installed in due order (as above), for example, Aṇimā in the East, Laghimā in the South-East and so on. The Siddhis (to be so installed are): Aṇimā, Laghimā, Prāpti, Prākāmya, Mahimā, Īśitā, Vaśitā and the eighth Kāmāvasāyitā.

51. These Siddhis should be represented as golden in complexion, decorated with all ornaments, holding (musical instruments like) flute, lute and others and wearing various types of wonderful garments.

52. He should install at the front-end of the petals Vedas and Śāstras. He should place Vedas in the four quarters and Śāstras in the intermediate quarters.

53. He should station the Ṛgveda in the East. The Veda is wearing a rosary of beads, white (in complexion), short (in height), pot-bellied, quiescent, with lotus-eyes and white garments.

54-55a. He should place Yajurveda in the South. The Veda is medium in height, thin-waisted, brown-eyed, with a big neck. It is yellow (in colour), wears red garments. It holds a rosary of beads in the left hand and Vajra-grass (a Darbha-like grass) in the right hand.

55b-56. In the West he should install the Sāmaveda which is tall in stature and has the brilliance of the sun. It holds a rosary of beads in the right hand, a conch in the left. It is large-eyed, wears golden (-coloured) garments, and is engaged in singing.

57. He should place the Atharvaveda to the North. It is white in body, attired in blue, holding a rosary (of beads) in the left hand, and a Khaṭvāṅga (a skull-topped club) in the right hand. It has the brilliance of fire, is red-eyed and old in age.

58. In the South-East corner he should station Dharmaśāstra, seated on a lotus. It is white-complexioned and holds in its hands a necklace and a balance.

59. In the South-West corner he should place Sāṅkhya with long hair and nails. It is fat-bodied, white in complexion and holds a rosary of beads (to mutter Mantras) and a staff.

60. In the North-West corner he should then install Yoga, of golden complexion, thin-waisted, who has placed both of his hands on his lap and fixed his gaze on the tip of his nose.

61. In the North-East (he should) place Pāñcarātra, white in complexion, wearing a wreath of sylvan flowers, holding in his hand a rosary of beads and a ploughshare.

62. The garments of these four should be white, fine yet of strong texture and the eyes should be (represented) as long like lotus-petals.

63. One should install in the intermediate space of the ends (of petals) great sages along with their wives, reciting the Vedas, in a serial order, like East, South-East (South, South-West etc.).

64. He should install Marīci associated with (his wife) Kalā (in the East), Atri also in company of Anasūyā (in the South-East), Aṅgiras along with Śraddhā (in the South), Pulastya with Havirbhū.

65. (He should place) Pulaha in association with Gati (in the South-West), Kratu with Kriyā (in the West), Bhṛgu associated with Khyāti (in the North-West), Vasiṣṭha in company of Arundhatī (in the North).

66. All these are (to be shown as) two-handed, lean, having matted hair and overgrown beards and mustaches, performers of penance, and holding in their hands staffs and water-gourds.

Outside the lotus, in eight quarters and intermediate quarters, Guardians of the Quarters of whom Indra is prominent (should be installed), along with their vehicles, in the order of cardinal points (as above).

67-69. In the East, he should install four-armed Indra riding his (elephant) Airāvata. He is shown as holding a thunderbolt, a goad, a lotus (in three hands) and as promising boons (by the position of fingers in the fourth). He is gold-like in complexion. His garments are beautiful and orange in colour. He is decked with various ornaments, of wide eyes with reddish outer angles. He should be endowed with all auspicious characteristics.

70-71. In the South-East corner he should install Fire-god, red in complexion, four-handed, holding in each hand a pike (Śūla), a spear (Śakti) and sacrificial ladles called *Sruc* and *Sruva*. (He is) seated in a gold-chariot (drawn by) of four parrots, with Wind as his charioteer. (He has) three eyes, smoke as his garment, tawny-coloured beard and matted hair and reddish-brown eyes.

72. He should install in the South Yama, dark-complexioned with

gold(-coloured) garment. He is fourhanded, holding in each (hand) a staff, a sword, an axe and a noose. Decorated in different kinds of ornaments, he is riding an intoxicated buffalo.

73-74. In the South-Western direction he should place Nairṛta, of (a head with) erect hairs, with uneven (number of) eyes, having two hands holding a sword in one and a noose in the other, and using human beings as vehicle. (He should be shown to be) of green beard, smoke-like complexion, wearing black garment, richly adorned with a number of gold ornaments, terrible to non-Vaiṣṇavas.

75-76. Then, in the West (he should install) Varuṇa having the lustre of the (precious stone called) sapphire, wearing white garments. He is four-handed and adorned with pearl necklaces. He rides on a chariot drawn by seven swans. He holds a noose with both of his hands. With the other two (hands) he holds a vessel studded with gems and a conch.

77. In the North-West he should install the Wind-god of green complexion. He has two hands and wears black garments. He rides on drops of water. His hair is let loose and the mouth is open (agape) and has his (own) banner.

78-79. In the North he should place Kubera of golden complexion. He has four hands, holding in them an iron mace, a javelin, a trident and a vessel of precious stones. He is attired in blue. He is bearded and rides a palanquin. His left eye is reddish-brown. He wears a number of ornaments and puts on an armour.

80. In the North-East he should install the great Rudra in his half-man-half-woman form. The left half should be made (represented) as Pārvatī and the right half as Śaṅkara.

81. In the (male) half as Īśvara there should be matted hair decorated with the (crescent) moon. In the Umā-half (the female half) there should be a decorative Tilaka-mark on (the forehead) and the hair parted on this side of the head, leaving a partition line (from the forehead upwards).

82. The forehead of (male) half is smeared with sacred ash (lines), while the other half is beautified with a saffron-mark. The (male) half has the sacred thread of a serpent, while the (female) half is adorned with a necklace (on the breast).

83-84. On the (female) half a plump breast covered with a bodice, on the waist a gold waistband and gold-aṅklet on the feet should be shown. The garment should be orange-coloured. The two hands should be decorated with bangles with jewelled rings (on the fingers), holding in one hand a trident and a rosary of beads in the other.

85. On the right (male) side should be a waistband made of serpents and an elephant's hide as a garment. The two hands have coils of serpents (as an ornament) and they hold a mirror and a lotus-flower.

86. God Mahādeva of this (half-man-half-woman) form riding a bull should be installed.

In this manner the worshipper should install the Guardians of the eight Quarters.

87. The worshipper should install eight Planets out of the town, each Planet occupying his own cardinal point, and riding his own chariot.

88-89. The Sun should be stationed in the East. He should be yellow-garmented, and red in complexion (like red lead). He is two-handed with a lotus in (one) hand. He rides in a chariot having one wheel of twelve spokes. To this chariot of excessive refulgence are yoked green-coloured seven horses to the left side.

90-91a. In the South-East corner the fair-complexioned, white-garmented Bhṛgu (Venus—but Bhṛgu is a male sage in Indian mythology) should then be posted. He is two-handed, holding a staff and a water-gourd and is pleasant and gentle in appearance. He rides in a chariot made of gold, yoked with ten horses of variegated colours.

91b-92. In the South, Mars, red in complexion with red attire should be placed. He is fourarmed, holding an iron mace, a javelin, a trident (in three), the fourth promising boons. His gold chariot should be shown (as) yoked with eight red-cólour horses.

93-94a. Rāhu should be installed in the South-West corner. He is attired in blue. He is four-handed, holding in them a shield, a sword, a javelin (Śakti) and a spear (Śūla). His mouth is terrible and he is dark in form. He should be made as riding in an iron chariot yoked with eight horses of black-bee colour.

94b-95. Saturn should be installed in the West. He is sapphire-blue in complexion. He is two-handed with a bow and a trident in his hands. He is of lazy (dim?) eyes and wears black garments. He is stationed in a chariot made of black iron, yoked with eight horses of variegated (spotted) colours.

96-97. He should install in the North-West corner the fair-complexioned Moon-god attired in white. He has two hands, in one of which he holds an iron mace. He rides in a chariot with three wheels, each having a hundred spokes. It is watery. Ten horses white like *Kunda* flowers are yoked on either side of it.

98. In the northern corner the son of Soma, i.e. Budha (Mercury), having two hands should be posted. With one hand he affords freedom

from fear and with the other he confers boons. He is red in complexion. He is to be made as occupying a golden chariot yoked with eight horses of greenish and yellowish colour.

99. In the North-East corner the Planet Guru (Jupiter) should be installed. He is golden in complexion and white in dress. He is two-handed, lotus-eyed, holding a staff and water-pot of gourd (in his hands). He is seated in an excellent gold chariot yoked with eight white horses.

100-101. In this manner, the worshipper should install all the Aṅga-devatās of the Lord in due order in places within the interior of the city (formed) in the pericarp (of the lotus). He should install the *Vibhava*-type of forms of the Aṅga-deities of Vāsudeva. He should install them as betelnuts or flowers and unbroken rice-grains.

CHAPTER TWENTYEIGHT

Kriyā-Yoga: Meditation on the Forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa[1]

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

1. After sipping water and practising breath-control (with *Oṁ bhūr* etc.) and then with a composed mind, one should pay obeisance to one's desired deities, and proclaim the time (*tithi* etc.) and place (of worship).

2. After taking the solemn vow (the formal *Saṅkalpa*), "I shall perform the worship of Vāsudeva for the accomplishment of *Ekānta Dharma*," one should then perform the procedural *Nyāsa* (i.e. assignment of the various parts of the body to deities accompanied with prayers or Mantras and corresponding gesticulations).

3. In *Nyāsa*, the following are the Mantras: (1) The Twelve-syllabled Mantra (*oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*), (2) the Viṣṇu Gāyatri,[2] (3) the eight-syllabled Nārāyaṇa Mantra (*oṁ namo nārāyaṇāya*) and (4) the six-syllabled Viṣṇu Mantra (*oṁ viṣṇave namaḥ*).

4. These are prescribed for twice-born castes. For others three are given here:

1. The actual procedure of the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is described in this chapter.

2. *nārāyāṇāya vidmahe, vāsudevāya dhīmahi /*
tanno viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt //

(i) The eight-syllabled Vāsudeva Mantra (*oṁ vāsudevāya namaḥ*).
(ii) The five-syllabled Hari Mantra (*haraye namaḥ*).
(iii) The six-syllabled Keśava Mantra (*keśavāya namāḥ*).

These are approved for Nyāsa as well as for Homa (oblations to fire).

5. Just as one performs Nyāsa on various parts of his own body (uttering specific mantras), the same way all the Nyāsas should be performed on the various parts of the idol of Śrī Viṣṇu while uttering the specified Mantras. Then one should wipe off the idol with a clean cloth.

6. Placing the pitcher (of water) to one's left side and invoking all the Tīrthas (sacred places, rivers) there, one should worship it with the articles of worship such as sandalpaste, flowers etc.

7. After sprinkling the articles of worship and one's own person with the water from the (worshipped) pitcher and after worshipping the conch and the bell, one should perform the *purification* of the *bhūtas* (i.e. elements constituting the body).

8. After burning the (internal) sinful body with internal fire and wind, one remaining stable (in one's posture), should reflect upon the identity of one's pure self with Brahman.

9. Then performing breath-control, one should, with concentrated mind, meditate upon Lord Rādhākṛṣṇa of the form of imperishable Brahman in one's heart.

10. The lotus (i.e. the Yogic plexus) at the navel is in a drooping position like the flower of Kadalī (plantain tree). Reflecting upon the vital wind called Apāna, one should bring about its union with the vital wind called Prāṇa.

11. After bringing it in the hollow stalk of the lotus (the internal path through which life breath proceeds upwards, the path of Kuṇḍalinī?), one should pull in the upward direction their 'lotus' along with that (breath). Making a loud sound it goes to the 'heart' (known as *hṛt-kamala).* It fully blossoms there shiningly expanding in the cavity of the heart.

12. In the mass of light (permeating that 'sky') one should meditate upon quiescent Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Rādhikā who is the most beautiful and outstanding, by his surpassing superior refulgence.

13-27. One should meditate upon that divine personality constituted of *cit* (the animating principle), as being in the sitting or standing posture. (He should be contemplated as) a lad (below the age of fifteen), beautiful like ten million gods of love (their accumulated beauty);

characterised by divine limbs full of suitable beauty; his body, pure and charming like the autumnal moon; his pair of arms long and lovely; his lotusfeet with reddish, tender soles and beautiful toes; the prominent, red, resplendent brilliance of his nails having put to shame the moon (the crescent of the moon); with a beautiful pair of feet wearing tinkling anklets and *Haṁsakas* (swan-foot-shaped foot ornament) with well-rounded pair of calves; beautiful with symmetrical knees and thighs; with beautiful waist, the yellow garment over which is tied with a girdle of excellent jewels; with the three folds (of skin on the upper part of the belly) hidden between his bulging belly and the deep navel, having a broad and high (well-developed) chest beautified by the circular line of hair of Śrīvatsa; adorned with ornaments like the lolling bunch of flowers and pearl-necklaces of twenty-four strings (*Gucchārdha*) and of a hundred strings (*Devacchanda*) and others; wearing a gold sacred thread and various kinds of garlands of fragrant flowers; adorned with bracelets on the wrists having the beauty of bloomed red lotus; having many (lit. more than one) rings set with excellent gems, illuminating the tiny joints of his fingers; playing upon a sweet-sounding flute fascinating the minds of all; having broad shoulders with concealed collar-bones; shining with armlets round his mighty arms; wearing a garland of sylvan flowers with the humming sound of hovering blackbees (madly) desirous of its fragrance; with the refulgent Kaustubha gem in the ornament round his neck, which was like a conch; with a shapely chin and shining with lips red like the Bimbī fruit; with a full-moon-like face beaming with a slight white smile; having an excellent beautiful nose shapely like sesamum flower; having crocodile-shaped ear-rings illuminating his symmetrical ears; adorned with ear-ornaments like a bunch of variegated flowers shining above his ears; the beauty of whose cheeks is enhanced by the moon-light-like lustre of even-shaped tiny teeth; whose eyes are beautiful with reddish corners and longish like the petals of a lotus; his forehead broad and high and eyebrows (curved) like the bow of the god of love; with hair on the head curly, fine, black, glossy and hence attractive (to the mind); who is wearing on his head a crown richly set with excellent jewels of various kinds; looking at his delighted people (devotees) with affectionate glance and with love.

28-33a. One should meditate upon Kṛṣṇa of the above description and contemplate Rādhā on his left side—Rādhā with two hands, complexion fair like gold, wearing a clean garment of reddish-yellow colour; with refulgent ornaments, (ear-rings) set with excellent jewels adorn-

ing her symmetrical ears; having a nose like (the beak of) a parrot; young in age (below fifteen years); with eyes like the young one of a deer; with plump, protruding thick breasts; with a slender waist and big buttocks; adorned with a girdle set with jewels; beautified with various heavenly (or brilliant) ornaments; with her face like a full-blown lotus, beaming with smile; whose excellent hands are shining by gem-set rings, armlets and bangles etc. (all set with jewels); whose lotus-feet are adorned with tingling anklets and Haṁsūkas (an ornament for the ankles shaped like a goose's foot); on whose broad forehead are shining a *Tilaka* mark of saffron and an ornament of the forehead; with lips (red) like a Bimba fruit; with excellent cheeks; with her braids of hair decorated with jasmine flowers; gazing with love at the Lord; holding a lotus in her hand.

33b. After having meditated upon Rādhikā of the above description, one should worship the Lord along with her.

CHAPTER TWENTYNINE

Kriyā-Yoga: Procedure of the Worship of Vāsudeva

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

1. After worshipping him mentally with various articles (and services) of worship, the devotee should invoke him and establish (infuse) him in the idol of Viṣṇu by *Sthāpana Mudrā* (i.e. a certain position of fingers practised in worship to indicate that the deity invoked is established in the idol).

2. Then he should invoke the deities constituting him (i.e. his subordinate deities) by their respective separate Mantras or by their names (which itself is a) mantra, and then should establish them well.

3. He should ring (or play upon) some musical instrument like the bell and others and should make a clapping sound. Presuming that the deity has got up from sleep, he should brush (i.e. imagine to brush) the teeth.

4-5. He should give water mixed with *Śyāmāka* (a rice-like corn), *Viṣṇukrānta* (a plant like Clitoria terntea), Dūrvā grass and a lotus as *Pādya* (water for washing the feet) to the Lord. Then in the water meant for sipping as *Arghya*, he should put sandalpaste, rice-grains

with unbroken ends, flowers, ends of Darbha grass, gingelly seeds, mustard seeds, barley seeds. Dūrvā grass should be put after filling the vessel for Arghya with water.

6. He should give water made fragrant with the outer skin of nutmeg, cloves, cardamoms, Kaṅkola and the fragrant root of the plant *Andropogon muricatus* as *Ācamanīya* and then should bathe Hari.

7. At first he should smear the person of the Lord with oil from fragrant flowers. Then he should cleanse the body by rubbing and cleansing it with *Kalka* (viscous sediments of ground and crushed oily substance).

8. With steady, unruffled mind he should bathe (the idol of Viṣṇu) with (Pañcāmṛta i.e.,) milk, curds, ghee, honey and sugar separately along with their respective Mantras.[1]

9. He should then bathe it with pure, hot, fragrant water. Then he should slightly worship it with sandalpaste etc. on the pedestal for bath.

10. The Brāhmaṇa should cast aside the stale flowers etc. (of the previous worship) to the northern side. He should perform the ablution with address as *Rājan* etc., or with Sāman hymns or the special occult lore of Mahāpuruṣa, reciting Śrīsūkta (RV I.165) and Viṣṇusūkta (RV IX.I).

11. Initiated women, Śūdras should perform the ablution-ceremony with (i.e. reciting) Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma ('A thousand names of Viṣṇu') or with one hundred and eight names.

12. Then wiping him off with a piece of cloth, he should dress him and Rādhā with very costly clothes with great love, according to his own capacity.

13. He should give fine, white, auspicious sacred thread to the Lord. He should put ornaments of gold and precious stones all over his person.

14. According to the season, he should make the sandalpaste mark or one of thick saffronpaste, at the proper place as is customary.

15. After adorning Rādhikā with ornaments as are proper for her, he should draw with saffron and unbroken grains of rice the *Tilaka* mark on the forehead and decorative figures on her person.

1. They are *'āpyāyasva'* (RV I.91.Ib), *'dadhikrāvaṇo'* (RV IV. 39.6), *'ghṛtam mimikṣe'* (RV II.3.11), *'madhu vātā'*, (RV I.90.6), *'svaduḥ pavasva'* (RV IX. 85.6). The first word of these Mantras suggests the material used for bathing. Beyond this tenuous relation, the meanings of the mantras show their irrelevance. Purāṇika Mantras used for this are meaningful.

16. After showing the mirror, he should worship him with garlands of flowers (round his neck) and chaplets or garlands of flowers adorning the head and with one thousand sprouts of Tulasī leaves.

17. One should worship the Lord with a Tulasī leaf or a flower uttering (with every leaf or flower) a name of Viṣṇu in the dative case followed by *namaḥ* ('obeisance to') (e.g. *keśavāya namaḥ*) (and thus complete the thousand names).

18. With powders of fragrant and auspicious materials he should make the incense-burning of the Daśāṅga type and with Amṛta etc.

19. He should prepare a lamp with a pair of wicks filled with ghee. He should make the great offering of pure food according to his capacity.

20. One should place (in a plate) on a four-footed stool *Saṁyāva* (i.e. a cake of wheat fried with ghee and made oblong in shape, spread over with sugar), *Pāyasa* (i.e. rice boiled in milk), *Apūpa* (a small round cake of flour and meal), *Śaṣkulī-khaṇḍa* (a piece of a kind of baked cake), *Laḍḍukas* (sweet balls), *Pūrikā* (a kind of cake filled in ghee or oil, called *Purī* in Marathi), *Polikā* (a cake with sweet material inside and baked, called Poḷī in Marathi), boiled rice mixed with kidney beans, condiments, curds, milk, ghee etc.

21. He should, with affection, make him take meals and offer water at intervals (to drink). In half a *Muhūrta* (24 minutes) he should give water to wash hands therewith.

22. The remnants of the food of the Lord, having been assigned to Viṣvaksena and other deities should be placed aside for one's own sake. The ground should be cleansed.

23. As 'mouth-perfume' to bring fragrance to the breath of the deity, he should give a betel leaf with the powder of betel-nut, cloves, cardamom, nutmeg and other such materials wrapped in it.

24. Giving a coconut and other fruits and Dakṣiṇā as per one's capacity, he should perform the waving of light (before the Lord) accompanied with instrumental music.

25. After offering him a handful of flowers, he should then praise him with eulogies meant for him. He should glorify his name while singing and dancing in his presence. (This is the *Kīrtana* form of *Bhakti*.)

26. After performing it (*Kīrtana*) for a Muhūrta (48 minutes) and circumambulating the deity, he should prostrate himself like a staff, slightly transversal to the South, on the ground.

27. A man should prostrate himself touching the ground with eight parts of the body (viz. two hands, two feet, two knees, chest and head)

or five parts of his body (viz. two hands, two feet and head); but a woman should pay obeisance with only the five parts of her body and never otherwise.

28. The prostration is called *Aṣṭāṅga* ('eight-limbed')[1] when it is performed with two feet, two hands, two knees, chest, head, sight, speech and mind.

29. The prostration is called *Pañcāṅga* ('five-limbed') when it is performed with two hands, mind, (bending down of) head, speech and sight.[2] (There are six factors involved, though it is called *Pañcāṅga* unless we presume the pair of hands as one.) In the performance of worship these two types of prostrations are superior.

30. "O Lord, I have submitted myself to you. Please protect me who am afraid of Saṁsāra." Praying to him thus, he should pursue his regular Vedic studies (recitation) to the best of his abilities.

31. After meditating on the rest and after taking (permission) given by him reverently by head, one should establish as before the invoked Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the lotus of his heart and should send away all the Aṅga-devas to their respective places.

32. After laying down the idol of Hari in a cane-box for rest or shutting up the image in the temple by closing the door, he should perform *Vaiśvadeva* ('offering of cooked food to all gods').

33. Distributing the remnant of food offered to Hari among his dependents and after enjoying (i.e. consuming) it himself, he should pass the remaining part of the day in (listening to or narrating) his stories etc.

34. He who daily performs the great worship as per procedure stated above, and worships Viṣṇu with devotion, becomes his (i.e. Viṣṇu's) attendant.

35. Ascending in a refulgent heavenly car coveted by Devas, the worshipper, endowed with a brilliant celestial body, goes to Hari's region called Goloka.

36. Or even if he performs everyday worship of Hari, he attains his desired objects along with (the four objectives of human life, viz.) Virtue (Dharma), Wealth, Pleasure and Final Emancipation.

1. *Pūjā-Prakāśa* (p.88) describes these two types of prostrations on the authority of Vyāsa but they are probably traditional verses of unknown authorship as given above. Verse 28 defines Aṣṭāṅga but gives three more, making it 'Ekādaśāṅga'. But the parts of the body actually touching the ground are eight. *Smṛti Candrikā* I, p.204 supports v 28 above.

2. In this the body does not touch the ground except in the case of feet. The prescription of this type of prostration to women is obvious.

37. If one is incapable of performing worship of Hari along with Rādhā as per above procedure, he should worship only Hari with whatever articles of service become available.

38. A Brāhmaṇa with a mantra of twelve syllables (*oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*) and others with Hari's name as Mantra should perform the worship of Hari. It is the devotion only which confers *Siddhi* (i.e. accomplishment of certain supernatural powers).

39. On Ekādaśī (eleventh day in either half of a month) and especially on the birth-festival of Hari and such other days, Mahāpūjā ('a great worship') should be celebrated to the best of one's abilities by all Vaiṣṇavas.

40. Even if one performs only the installation (of Hari's idol) in a temple built by another, he becomes absolved of all sins and becomes a sovereign emperor (of all the world).

41. A rich person should get built a beautiful, firm (durable) temple of Hari. He who does so will get the kingdom of the three worlds, without any thorn (troublesome person or enemy).

42. He who enhances the continuity of the worship by instituting the service or job (of worshipping Hari), will really obtain excellent happiness in the world of Viṣṇu.

43. He who lays the foundation, starts the construction of Viṣṇu's temple and (provides for) his worship, certainly attains lordship comparable to Vāsudeva.

44. He who deprives one of his employment of Hari's worship given either by himself or by others, experiences tortures caused by the god of Death in hell for a period of a Kalpa.

45. The doer (of an action), one who urges to do it, the person helping and the consenter—all these four have share in an act meritorious or otherwise.

46. O Nārada! In this way procedure of Kriyā-Yoga has been described to you by me. It is by this that the *Ekāntika Dharma* will be accomplished by those who are inclined to it.

47. A person who brooding over objects of pleasure in the mind, outwardly performs the worship of Hari, will never obtain the declared fruit even by using a great amount of material for worship.

48. Restraining one's own mind wandering here and there in vulgar pleasure, a person, desirous of liberation, should be devoutly engaged in the worship of Viṣṇu.

49. Without worshipping Hari, persons following Mahāvrata, though performers of severe penance, intelligent ones who have studied the

Vedas and who are practising Sāṅkhya and Yoga, will never attain *Siddhi* (i.e. Mokṣa).

CHAPTER THIRTY

Description of Yoga with Eight Limbs[1]

Skanda said:

1. Having heard the procedure of the worship of Vāsudeva in this way, Nārada became pleased. He addressed again the supreme preceptor of sages.

Nārada said:

2. The Kriyā-Yoga bestowing the great fruit (i.e. liberation from Saṁsāra) has been properly elucidated by Your Lordship. It should be practised with concentrated mind by persons desirous of *Siddhi* (*Mokṣa*).

3. O excellent preceptor! But control of the mind is very difficult to be achieved even by persons endowed with knowledge. What can one say about those men whose minds are involved in Karmas in this world!

4. Except that (i.e. control of the mind) the worship of Hari is not conducive to desired fruit. Hence it behoves you to expound to me the means of controlling it.

Skanda said:

5. Thus enquired by the sage, Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of sages, the omniscient friend of Nara, spoke to Nārada.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

6. O sage! What you state is true. The mind has immense power. Even if it is subdued, thoughtful people place no faith in it as in an enemy.

7. In the case of embodied beings, there is no enemy comparable to mind. Through the yogic practice of meditation on Viṣṇu it becomes free from defects and gets quiescent.

1. This chapter is based on Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*.

8. As it is very difficult to bring it under control like an untamed horse, it is to be controlled with firm, virtuous means by men endowed with disaffection for worldly pleasures.

9. There are many means (for this purpose), but out of them, according to the view of saints, the practice of Aṣṭāṅga-Yoga ('Yoga of eight limbs') is the most important and giver of immediate fruit.

10. O Brāhmaṇa, *Yama* (moral restraints), *Niyama* (voluntary religious observances); *Āsana* (bodily postures), control of breath, *Pratyāhāra* (withdrawing from objects of pleasure), *Dhāraṇā* (fixing the mind on one object), the seventh Aṅga *Dhyāna* (abstract contemplation) and *Samādhi* (perfect absorption of the mind in the Supreme Spirit), the eighth—this is the order (of successive steps) in Yoga.

11. Among them nonviolence, celibacy, truth, non-stealing and non-possession—these five are *Yamas*. They are to be practised with effort.

12. Purity, penance, contentment, study of Vedas and worship of Viṣṇu—these five *Niyamas* constitute the second Aṅga.

13. Giving up unsteadiness of the body and maintaining it in a comfortable position as in *Svastika* and other postures is called *Āsana* and it conquers the mental distress from pairs of opposites (such as pleasure and pain).

14. Holding at one place the vital breaths that wander everywhere, according to the method advised by the spiritual preceptor, is called *Prāṇāyāma* ('breath control').

15-16. When the wind (i.e. vital breath) is unsteady, the mind gets unsteady. When it (i.e. the vital breath) is steady, the mind gets steady. This should always be practised in a pure place by means of *Pūraka* (inhalation), *Kumbhaka* (i.e. holding within the inhaled air), *Recaka* (exhalation).

The backward pull of the mind and the propensities of the sense-organs from their respective objects is called *Pratyāhāra*.

17. Fixation of the mind along with the vital breath in the form of Vāsudeva in different places (i.e. Yogic plexuses) from the navel (*Mūlādhāra Cakra*) to other places is called *Dhāraṇā*.

18. The (progressive) meditation on each part of the Lord's person separately beginning from his lotus-feet is called *Dhyāna*.

19. The absorption (holding in) of the vital breath and the mind in Hari with deep love is called *Samādhi*. It is very much coveted by Yogins.

20. This Yoga is accomplished by men who have been trained in these eight Aṅgas by spiritual preceptors who themselves have been *Siddhas* ('Masters of Yoga'). It consists of perfection of *Samādhi*.

21. O Nārada! Know that there is no other proper means of controlling the mind like this in case of men desirous of liberation from Saṁsāra.

22. There is absolutely no fear to Yogins from Madana ('god of Love') who is the arch-enemy of performers of penance and the agitator of the universe.

23. A knower of Yoga avoids the coming time of death and quite independently gives up his body by (entering into) *Samādhi*.

24. By pressing the anus by both of his heels and gradually drawing up the vital breath between the two feet, he takes it to the position of death (*Mṛtyu*).

25. Meditating upon Keśava with his mind and muttering his six-syllabled Mantra (i.e. *keśavāya namaḥ*), he takes his vital breath to the position of *Prajāpati* (in his own body).

26. A knower of Yoga, a devotee of Vāsudeva draws the breath up to the navel, heart, chest, and throat and the (middle of the) eyebrows. (These parts of the body indicate the different Yogic plexuses, Cakras, in the body from Mūlādhāra to Ājñā Cakra.)

27. A Yogī practices withholding (control) and releasing of Prāṇa (vital breath), mind and senses in these six places (*Cakras*) one by one till he has that independence (and ability to do so).

28. Conquering each place one by one and leaving it behind, he proceeds to the next (higher) post. He who has reached the sixth place (i.e. Ājñācakra) has no trouble and fatigue in that practice.

29. After closing down the seven apertures and bringing the vital breath accompanied with the senses and mind to the crown of the head,[1] a knower of Yoga advances to (the aperture in the crown of the head called) *Brahma-randhra*.

30. Then after giving up desires for all Māyic objects, he identifies his mind with Vāsudeva and abandons his mortal coil.

31. Then coming to the abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa which is beyond darkness, he, endowed with a celestial body, lives in bliss, serving the Lord.

32. Thus, O Brāhmaṇa, the epitome of the science of Yoga has

1. I have thus translated *Tālu* on the basis of Yogic Texts, even though the dictionary meaning of *Tālu* is *Palate*.

been narrated to you. Conquering your mind thereby propitiate him forever.

CHAPTER THIRTYONE

Eulogy of Nara and Nārāyaṇa

Skanda said:

1. Having heard properly (and faithfully) all this sacred (consistent with the sacred Law) speech of the Lord (Nārāyaṇa), the sage, all whose doubts were resolved, spoke to him with his palms folded in reverence.

Nārada said:

2. All my doubts have been cleared with your favour, O revered Sir. The greatness of Vāsudeva has been easily grasped by me.

3. For some time, I shall perform penance here along with you, and always hear (discourses on) knowledge. Thereby I shall make myself mature.

Skanda said:

4. After saying this and having been permitted by him (Nārāyaṇa), Nārada stayed there for one thousand celestial years, performing penance.

5. Everyday, as permitted by time, he heard from Hari's (Nārāyaṇa's) mouth (discourses on) Dharma, knowledge etc. The king of Yogīs attained maturity there.

6. He developed extreme affection for Śrīkṛṣṇa, the soul abiding in all. That leader of Bhāgavatas became always engaged in singing (in praise of) the good qualities of the Lord.

7. The Lord (Nārāyaṇa) being pleased (with Nārada) spoke to the accomplished Yogin who had attained the deepest faith and highest proficiency in devotion (*Bhakti*), words which were conducive to the (spiritual) welfare of all.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa said:

8. O great sage! You have now become a Siddha (i.e. a perfect

or accomplished one). Go and work for the welfare of the people. It behoves you to propagate *Ekānta Dharma* everywhere.

Skanda said:

9. Obeying this order of the preceptor of the world with (i.e. bowing down) his head, while (i.e. before) departing from that place, he stood there eulogizing him (Nārāyaṇa), paying obeisance to him with hands folded in reverence.

Nārada said:

10. Repeated obeisance to you, O Lord, the preceptor of the world, O Nārāyaṇa of supernatural divine form. You are the mine of infinite beneficent and auspicious qualities. Be always specially affectionate to me, your slave.

11. You are Vāsudeva, the Abode (Bearer) of the universe; you perform penance for the welfare of the world. You are the Lord of the masters of Yoga, stabilized in quiescence. You are the Lord of those who seek pleasure in spiritual pursuits. You are the great preceptor of Paramahaṁsas (ascetics of the highest order).

12. You are all-pervading, the most prominent one among sages; you are the imperishable soul, the controller of Jīvas (living beings) and gods; you are the witness (of everything), the great Person, the self-dependent one (not controlled by others). Kāla (Time, the destroyer of all) became great by (a mere gesture of) your eyebrow.

13. O Lord, you indulge in the sport of creation etc. of the world as the soul of Māyā-Puruṣa but still you are not the doer; you are devoid of attributes, aggregate of all beings, Supreme Brahman, greater than the great.

14. You are the Truth. You are self-luminous; your power is beyond comprehension or reasoning capacity; your form is worthy of being contemplated by those whose selves are identified with Brahman. You are the preceptor of Bṛhadvrata (i.e. Mahāvrata). You are the chief of great sages, O subduer of the pride of the god of Love by your prowess.

15. It is because of your brilliance and prowess that anger, addiction, envy, greed which are the chief enemies of performers of penance, are never capable of even entering your hermitage.

16. You are constituted of the Vedas, of knowledge; you are the path of immortality; you consist of Dharma; you are the support of the creation of Dharma; you have uprooted the source (or creation) of

Adharma (sinfulness); you are immutable, imperishable, invisible kinsman.

17. You are attributeless and of flawless form. All your acts become attributeless. You are worthy of being adored by those who are deṣirous of achieving (the objectives in life, viz.) Dharma (Virtue), Wealth and Love as well as by those who aspire after Mokṣa. You are the sovereign ruler (of the universe), O Lord.

18. You are the only one capable of protecting from the great fear arising from Kāla, Māyā, Yama (god of Death) and Saṁsāra. You are extremely compassionate and ignore the faults (and sins) committed by your devotees. You are verily affectionate to your devotees.

19. He who remembers simply the name or form of your incarnations at the time of death, instantly becomes completely absolved of the great flood of sins and goes quickly to heaven.

20. Abandoning you, a deluded man who becomes attached to his body constituted of three constituent substances, things connected with the body, to wife, children, kinsmen and wealth is deceived by Māyā.

21. The human body is proper (medium) for performing your devotion which even the residents of heaven seek. I know, the pleasures of heaven devoid of devotion to you are comparable to hell.

22. You perform penance for the happiness of the three worlds. Still it is a much greater favour done to the residents of Bhārata that you have taken incarnation here and shine here by your movements.

23. Those who do not resort here to you, who are of the above description, are regarded as ungrateful ones in the Śāstras. Hence may you show favour unto me who firmly resort to you exclusively.

CHAPTER THIRTYTWO

Text-transmission of Vāsudeva-Māhātmya

Skanda said:

1. After eulogizing the Lord (Nārāyaṇa) Nārada went away from that place and arrived at first at Vyāsa's hermitage called Śamyāprāsa.

2. He was affectionately honoured there by rising up from the seat to welcome him, offering a seat and other formalities. He expounded the *Ekāntika Dharma* to him (Vyāsa) who was desirous to know it.

3. The sage then went to the assembly of God Brahmā. There he

taught it to Devas, Pitṛs and great sages who attended it (i.e. the assembly) while God Brahmā listened to it.

4. Sun-god who was present there, again heard the whole of that Dharma from Nārada as he had heard it from Nārāyaṇa formerly.

5. He respectfully narrated it to Vālakhilyas who go ahead of him. They told Devas like Indra and others who assembled on Mount Meru.

6. Having heard this Dharma from them, Sage Asita narrated it to Pitṛs when he happened to go to the world of manes, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

7. The Pitṛs including Aryamā and others told it to King Śantanu who narrated it accurately to his son Bhīṣma.

8. At the end of the Bhārata War, he (Bhīṣma) while lying on a bed of arrows, narrated it to Dharmarāja who enquired about it in a big assembly.

9. Even Nārada who respectfully attended that assembly heard it and narrated it to Śaṅkara on Mount Kailāsa. He (in his turn) told me, O excellent sage.

10. O Brāhmaṇa, this has been narrated by me to you who abide by Dharma and enquired about it because my father told me that this Dharma should be given (i.e. taught) to the deserving ones.

11. By whomsoever was this glory of the Lord of Sāttvatas (Vāsudeva) heard, he (spontaneously) had great faith in it (leading to) his personal liberation from Saṁsāra.

12. On hearing the greatness of the son of Devakī (Kṛṣṇa) as glorified by Bhīṣma, even the royal sage Yudhiṣṭhira along with his brothers was delighted.

13. On learning that his maternal uncle's son (Kṛṣṇa) was the cause of all causes, the highly intelligent one was merged in the ocean of wonder.

14. The king regarded that the *Vyūhas* (manifestations) such as Vāsudeva (Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha) and all the incarnations like the Divine Boar and others were those of the Lord of Ramā.

15. Then the king (Yudhiṣṭhira) along with his younger brothers became extremely devoted to Kṛṣṇa of divine (yet) human body, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

16. On hearing this story (i.e. exposition of this Dharma) even all Brāhmaṇical, royal and divine sages who were present in that assembly became wonder-struck.

17. Having come to know that Kṛṣṇa was veritable Supreme Brah-

man in a human form, they, bowing down to him with reverence, betook themselves to his devotion.

18. This is his greatness. Hence, O piously disposed one, you also resort to that Vāsudeva with whole-hearted devotion.

19. The glory of Śrī Vāsudeva which results in the mitigation (and final extinction) of evil desires and which enhances devotion unto the Lord, has been narrated by me to you.

20-21. Whatever episodes in this Purāṇa have been narrated, their essence has been (as if) churned and extracted and it is this, O Brāhmaṇa. It is the essence of Vedas and Upaniṣads, of Sāṅkhya and Yoga, of Pāñcarātra and entire Dharmaśāstra.

22. This extremely auspicious song sung by the Lord himself confers wealth, fame, long life and is destructive of everything that is inauspicious.

23. Whoever listens to this meritorious (Māhātmya), glorifies it (to others) or reads it, his pure mind will be steadfast in Vāsudeva.

24. Those men will be his *Ekāntika Bhaktas* (i.e. devotees exclusively devoted to him), become identical with Brahman and in the end go to the world of Brahman which is beyond darkness.

25. (Hereby) one desirous of Dharma will attain Dharma; a person desirous (of any object) will get his desired object; a person covetous of wealth will obtain wealth; one having the object of getting Mokṣa, will attain excellent release from Saṁsāra.

26. A student will get learning (or his desired lore); a sick person will be relieved of his ailment. By merely hearing it all sins will get annihilated.

27. A Brāhmaṇa will attain Brāhmaṇic lustre, a Kṣatriya kingship, a Vaiśya wealth and a Śūdra happiness by listening to this (Māhātmya).

28. A king who goes to battle after hearing this will win. A woman will get the good fortune of the life-long firm devotion and favour of her husband; a girl will secure her desired groom.

29. Whatever desire a man cherishes will he obtain from listening to and glorifying this Māhātmya which is the crest-jewel of all Śāstras.

30. Hence, O excellent Brāhmaṇa, you always read this with devotion. And resort physically, verbally, mentally with devotion to the Lord who is affectionate to his devotees.

Sauti said:

31. After drinking the nectarine speech emanated from the lotus-

mouth of Mahāsena (i.e. Skanda), Sāvarṇi performed devotion unto the son of Vāsudeva, who is Brahman in a human form and auspicious to all.

32. You all who are established in your own Dharma (religious duties) and are conversant with Vedas and Āgamas, take recourse to Śrī Vāsudeva who is favourable to Brāhmaṇas, is the Lord worth resorting to and is of distinguished reputation.

33. Obeisance to Vāsudeva, the Lord of the world called Goloka, whose form is constituted of a mass of lustre, and who enhances the delight of devotion.

:: End of Vāsudeva-Māhātmya ::

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